

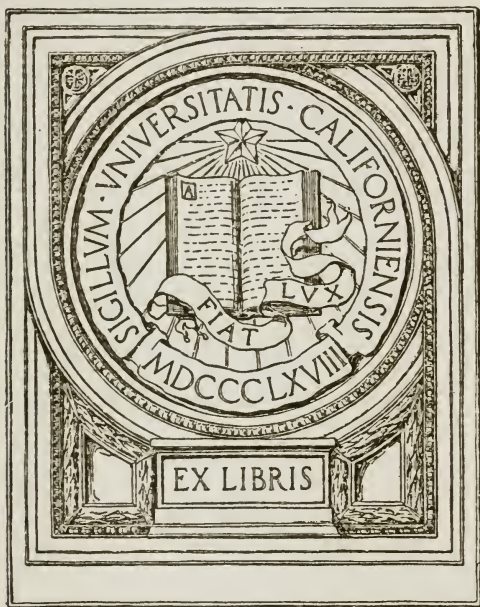
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THE
FIVE DAYS ENTERTAINMENTS
AT
WENTWORTH GRANGE

BY
FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE
late Fellow of Exeter College Oxford



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GIFT OF

Ella Sterling Mighels

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TO
CECIL, FRANK, AND GWENLLIAN
THESE STORIES
WRITTEN BEFORE THEY WERE BORN OR THOUGHT OF
ARE DEDICATED
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FATHER

August, 1868

ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE
FIVE DAYS' ENTERTAINMENTS
AT
Wentworth Grange

INTRODUCTION

IT was holiday time at Miss Cobham's school, but all the children had not gone home, and in consequence did not find it quite so much of a holiday as they had expected. Poor things! the parents of some twelve or fourteen of them lived across sea and land—in India—and so they were forced to leave their little ones at school the whole year round, unless some good-natured friend or relation kindly offered to take them to their houses for Christmas or Midsommer.

There were Emily, Arthur, Charles, Anna, and Eleanor: or Arthur, Emily, Charles, &c.—in fact though I have used only their Christian name, for convenience sake, as they did in talking,—“so Christians should call one another,”—I might fill up half

the page if I tried to arrange them in all the ways they would stand in. Arthur was brother to Anna, and Charles to Margaret, one of the younger children: they were both at school in the country, and were allowed, by Miss Cobham's kindness, to spend their summer holidays at her schoolhouse, as they had no other home wherein to meet their sisters.

Besides these, and among the little ones, whose names I pass over, was little Lucy Wentworth, who had been left at Miss Cobham's for a week or ten days, to recover her strength after an attack of cough from which she had been lately suffering.

On the day I am now speaking of, about the beginning of July, Lucy had been allowed by the doctor the pleasure of a walk for the first time since her illness; and all the children, by their kind mistress, Miss Cobham's leave, had in consequence set out to take a long stroll in the fields near the school. They were put under the charge of Arthur and Emily, the two eldest among them, who were each nearly fourteen years old, and were best fitted and not a little pleased to be considered the leaders of the party. Hunting up and down among the hedges, and gathering wild roses and hyacinths, the morning went by, and they then sat down to the luncheon they had brought with them, on a bank in the furthest field, by the side of the river Colne.

"Ah," cried little Lucy, starting up, and upsetting

her saucer of gooseberry tart into Eleanor's lap, "I am so sorry—no—I am so glad, I mean. You know mamma is coming to-night to take me home, and I shall have all the garden, and the park, and the lawn to run about in. How I wish you were all coming with me!" she continued, for a little disappointment arose on the faces of the rest at the thought that they would have no such pleasures. "I wonder whether mamma would let you come! Our house is so big, so *very* big, and now all the rest are away there would be plenty of room."

"I wish it could be, but I am afraid it can't—and can't is cannot," said Eleanor; and then the talk went off to other matters.

When the children returned to the school, they found that Mrs. Wentworth had already arrived there.

"Well, Lucy darling," she cried, kissing her little girl, "how have you enjoyed your walk?"

"Oh mamma, so much—so *very* much; but I have something to say to you. How I wish I could recollect it!"

"I know what it was," said Anna; "we were all looking about in the hedges, and I spied out a wren's nest, with the little eggs in it, and Lucy wished she could take you to see it."

"Charlie wanted to bring it here for you," said Lucy. "You know, he knows all about birds, beasts, and fishes, and he said he could take such care that the

old birds would not be angry with him for moving the nest, and that he would put it back directly quite safe in the place where we found it."

"I have heard Charlie is a great naturalist," said Mrs. Wentworth,—“there's a long word for you, Lucy; you must ask him to tell you what it means."

"Such a funny thing happened to Eleanor, mamma," cried Lucy, not noticing her little companion's imploring looks for silence; "you know she is so short-sighted, she cannot see nearly so far as Anna—she is so much the cleverest and quickest of us all! And there was an old man lying down asleep in one corner of the long field, and Eleanor thought he was the trunk of a tree lying there, and jumped up upon him."

Here Eleanor, who had retreated to a corner of the room, burst into tears.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Wentworth, softly, "you should never say anything that would vex you if you heard it said about yourself. You would not like to be taken for the trunk of a tree, or to take an old man for one. You know Eleanor cannot help it—go up and tell her how sorry you are to have vexed her."

"Oh mamma—but how I wish I could remember what I wanted to say to you," cried Lucy, and ran off to obey her mother's order.

"You must observe many interesting varieties of disposition and ability among your young pupils," said Mrs. Wentworth, turning to Miss Cobham. "With

their fresh minds and free-speaking tongues, a few minutes' talk, even, lets one into the open secrets of their character."

"It is one of the alleviations of my employment," said Miss Cobham.

"You must be sorry to see so many of them, however, left here, and unable fully to enjoy their holidays."

"Oh no—thank you—some of them have a great talent for amusing and pleasing the rest. I really think they do not find it dull. Emily tells them fairy stories without number, and we find the evenings go by quickly, with her and Arthur's help. Where is Arthur?" she said, looking round. "Oh, I daresay he has already gone off to his room to study his favourite new-old books, Brewster's 'Natural Magic' and the 'Demonology and Witchcraft.'"

"I am glad such books are not shut out of your library," said Mrs. Wentworth. "There is something flat and prosy in putting away fairy tales and adventures from the children, and preaching to them about physical science, which after all is never one quarter so interesting or useful for most of us as anything which has to do with other human creatures. Yet, at the same time, in case of fairy stories, it is right to set before them distinctly the true nature and character of such fictions. Without this, it is as easy to raise up foolish fears in their imaginations now, as in the days of King James. There is, I often think,"

she continued, smiling, but speaking seriously, "little need to tell people to 'walk in the old paths'—so naturally does the mind revert to former beliefs, and reclothe itself in temporarily cast-off superstitions. There is a circle in all things. People think they have made a positive advance: but look, and we shall often see whole nations winding their way clumsily back to a second childhood. And what an odd thing in human nature it is, that we always think we are advancing, and better than those who lived before us!"

This somewhat grave and schoolroom-like discourse was broken through by Lucy, who now, running up to her mother with a triumphant air, cried out,—

"I remember it now, mamma; I remember it. Oh, pray *do* do it, dear mamma!—pray do!—it will be so nice."

"But what is it, my dear? You forget you have not yet told me."

"Oh, mamma, can't you guess? It is, I wish so you would ask all the children here—all of us—to come home with you for the rest of the holidays! Just think what walks and feasts we would have together."

Mrs. Wentworth smiled, and Miss Cobham begged her not to think of giving herself so much trouble—repeating what she had said before on the subject.

But the lady, after a moment's thought, which seemed an age of delay to her impatient little daughter, said that it was true it was a large party, but that her house too was large and roomy also, and just now she and Lucy were left alone to occupy it; so that, if Miss Cobham agreed, she would lodge there all the children left at school during the last week of their holidays. Mrs. Wentworth finished by adding kindly, "You, too, dear Miss Cobham, must need a holiday, and should have more of one than you can expect to find here. I am sure I ought to be very glad to show any little kindness to one who has been so good a mother lately to my little girl."

Miss Cobham begged her not to think of herself in the matter, and a little friendly dispute took place, which wound up with a full consent to Mrs. Wentworth's proposal. Only, Miss Cobham would not be able to come before the last day, to fetch her little flock back to the fold again.

On the appointed evening the whole party, large and small, were safely landed at Mrs. Wentworth's house. Wentworth Grange was a very pretty place, built round three sides of a square, with long covered outside galleries connecting room with room, and opening on a terrace with vases and stone balustrades. Steps led down from this to a carefully-kept and gracefully-formed flower-garden, which ran along the

south side of the house, and contained a large conservatory, opening by glass doors upon the main sitting-room—the prettiest of all possible arrangements.

Emily and Arthur had been chosen by Miss Cobham to be the leaders of the party, and by their care all were quietly settled in their places; and after a well-provided and well-eaten supper, the younger ones, including Lucy Wentworth, were dismissed for the evening.

The five elder children—Emily, Arthur, Charles, Anna, and Eleanor, remained for a few minutes; and Mrs. Wentworth, holding up her finger to enforce silence, said,—

“It will be very easy for you to amuse yourselves, dear children, if the weather continues fine—but if it should not, we must think of some plan to prevent you all from finding your visit dull.”

“Oh, I am sure it will be fine,” said Eleanor and Anna together.

“I wish it may,” said Charles; “but as I came here I saw the ducks washing themselves, and the cows standing with their heads up in the air,—which are regular signs of several days of wet weather.”

They all laughed at the young naturalist's prophecy, and Mrs. Wentworth then went on to say, that in case they should be unable to go out they had better fix on some regular plan. Part of the day might be spent

in a large upper play-room, where battledore and shuttlecock, a pianoforte, and other contrivances for dancing and romping existed, (with all which part of the entertainment I am very sorry to say we shall have nothing to do,) but this would not be sufficient for the whole time, and they must find some quiet amusement to fill up the rest. "Even in our games," their kind hostess observed, "we should have a fixed plan. It is surprizing how much better things go on when only the filling-up and the details are left to chance. What an ugly garden we should have if the pinks and roses were scattered at random over the turf and the borders!"

The children were pleased, and they quickly settled their plan, agreeing to keep it a secret from the younger ones, that they might guess and find out what it was as each day went by. And for the same reason I shall leave my little readers—if I have as attentive listeners as Emily, Arthur, Charles, Anna, and Eleanor had—to use their wits and try to unravel for themselves the method and order of the successive stories.

FIRST DAY

They alone that seek may find :
Eyes were fashion'd for the blind.

As Charles had prophesied, so it happened. More rain falls in July (though we never should have thought it) than in any other month of the year: and this day was one continued shower-bath; the air seemed to have somehow lost itself, and got mixed up with the rain, so that you could not see the cedar on the lawn, and the grass was so thick with water, that it looked more white than green.

But Emily and Arthur were excellent managers. The morning went by pleasantly enough; and so soon as an early dinner was over, the whole party were, under their direction, called together to the large drawing-room, and ranged on stools, chairs, and sofas, in full expectation of something agreeable.

"Now, Arthur, are you ready?" said Mrs. Wentworth, turning to him as he stood behind a little table, fidgetting with a book of travels, as if he thought it was about to open its leaves and speak



EYES AND NO EYES

for him ; then to the children—"Attend ! As long as the rainy weather lasts, we have fixed on a set of stories to tell you every day ; and you must listen attentively, and try to make out what there is alike in the different tales. Random and Chance, away !" she said, smiling, and tracing a circle in the air with her right forefinger, "Everything is fixed, arranged, and ordered."

An awful silence followed : the children held their breath, and looked graver than judges (but not graver than judges ought to look) at the commencement of

ARTHUR'S FIRST TALE

FLORIO AND FIAMMETTA

THERE was once on a time a certain king of Naples, named Alfonso. His wife was dead, and all his hopes were set upon his two children—the Prince Carlo and the Princess Fiammetta. He was very fond of them, and would often say, shaking his head, "Carlo, when he becomes king, will reign so well, that no one will regret the death of his old father ; and as for Fiammetta, she is so beautiful and so good, that I shall never find any prince worthy to be her husband."

No one contradicted him, for in Naples people do not often contradict kings ; and besides, the young

Prince and Princess were so excellent, that everybody loved them, and only wished that their good fortune might equal their deserving.

As Carlo grew up, every day he became more brave and noble and beautiful—so much so, that the people of Naples, who are very superstitious, used to say that the fairies must have blessed him. And his father often thought that, as he was now an old man, he would give up his throne, and have the pleasure of seeing his son king during his own lifetime.

But the best plans often come to nothing, and so it was in this case. I have just said that the people of Naples are very superstitious, and I must now explain further what I mean by this.

Everybody has heard of witches, fairies, and the like, and knows that they now frighten no one but children.

("Oh, we are not at all afraid of them—not at all," interrupted several little voices.

"Very well," continued Arthur: "I dare say not; but we shall see.)

Now every one in Naples believes in such things, and the young Prince believed like the rest. His nurse especially had taught him that, besides lady-witches (who were once said to be found all the world over), there were certain men in Naples who had a magical power of hurting any one they chose, by looking steadily at him. Such people are

said to have an 'evil eye;' and if they like to turn it on anybody, he is directly seized with illness, or meets with some horrid misfortune, unless he can hold out his forefingers thus, (said Arthur, stretching out the first fingers of his right hand in the shape of a letter V,) the very moment that any one with the 'evil eye' comes into the room. And for fear lest they should not always recollect to do this, they carry little hands of red coral, with the fingers all ready out, with them; and all over their houses they fix up figures of hands, or sometimes a pair of deer's horns, to keep themselves from being hurt. I daresay you will think this very foolish, but so it is to this day.

You know those tall rods which are fixed against chimneys to carry away the lightning, and take it safe down into the ground—do you not? So the whole of the palace of King Alfonso was filled with horns, to conduct the 'evil eye' away—some in the hall, under a glass case, like an ornament or a stuffed bird; some on the passage-walls, like hat-pegs; some in the sitting-rooms and bed-rooms: and Prince Carlo, although in other things he was very brave and spirited, yet fully believed in all he had heard of the 'evil eye,' and how it could be averted or turned off from him; and every day, as he grew older, he believed it more and more, till, though courageous enough in other things, would shudder or turn pale if any one happened to fix his eyes on him.

And Fiammetta, who loved her brother much, and looked up to him for example in everything, was soon brought to think as he did ; for fear is, of all diseases, the most catching, and indeed is the disease which people often catch and die of, in spite of all the long names which doctors give it.

It happened one day, as he went out hunting in the hot sun, that Prince Carlo caught a very dangerous fever. When he began to recover, he was allowed for health's sake to walk in the palace garden. As, however, he had not yet regained his full strength, his sister went with him to lend him help : and they walked for some time in a very lively manner together. But as they turned round an orange-tree at the corner of one of the walks, suddenly they came upon a black servant of King Alfonso's standing and looking hard at them. The Prince trembled and almost fainted at the sight ; and when the servant, who could not tell what was the matter, and was thanking God to see his dear young master so nearly recovered from the fever, ran up to help the Princess to carry her brother into the palace, Carlo screamed out, " Oh, not him ! not him ! He will kill me—I know he will ! "

The Prince was at once put to bed, and the doctors sent for. They declared nothing could be worse than what had happened ;—that with the sudden shock of fear he had gone through, his fever had come back upon him, and that he would die if he were not kept

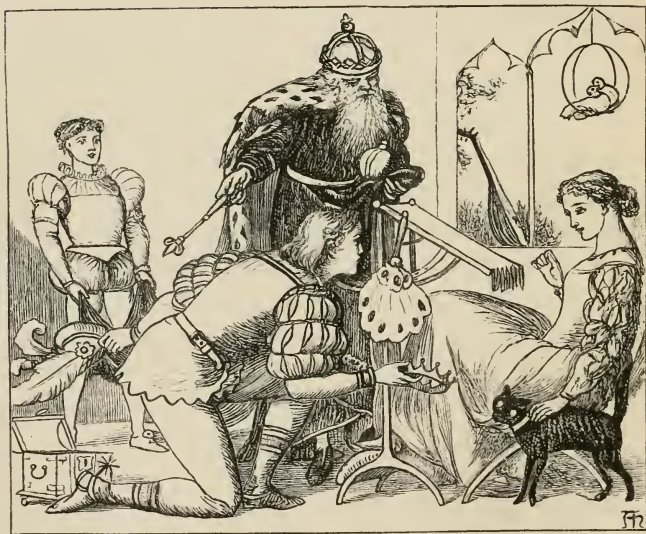
quite quiet. But it was in vain that they gave him soothing medicines: they could not touch the fever which was in his mind. All day he kept calling out, "I see his eye! I see his eye! I see his black eye looking at me!"—till at last he could say no more. His strength failed, and he died in the belief that he had been bewitched by the 'evil eye' of the negro servant. This was, as you may imagine, a sad blow to Carlo's father in his old age; but he bore it with what patience he could.

They buried the Prince with all proper solemnities,—and after a few days he was followed to the grave by the affectionate negro, who himself died of very grief at the thought of the evil he had occasioned.

It might have been hoped that the sight of all this would have cured Fiammetta of her belief in the 'evil eye;' when she had all these examples, not only what a fancy it was, but how much harm the belief in it had done. But though her father saw it, it was just otherwise with his daughter. She thought her brother's death was a clear proof of the reality of the 'evil eye;' she said the most clever things imaginable to prove that effects never come without causes, just like a philosopher of the nineteenth century; and she grew daily more timid and superstitious in consequence.

Her father the King, who had been so much grieved at his dear son's death, was almost equally pained to see his daughter's state, fearing lest it might end with

her as it had with Carlo. In order to give her something else to think of, he sent to the King of Albania to propose a marriage between his eldest son and the Princess Fiammetta. In due time Florio—for that was the name of the young Prince—appeared at the court of Naples. He was very tall and handsome, with bright hair and blue, gentle eyes: but at the same time he was very brave and spirited, and sat his horse better than any of Alfonso's courtiers.



So next day the King determined to bring him before his daughter. Fiammetta was sitting in her

room, embroidering at the frame, when Florio was led in. He knelt at her feet, and after the fashion of those times, begged her to cast her eyes on the beggar at her throne (so he called himself, but he was a very well-dressed beggar indeed), and to deign to accept the trifle which he had dared to bring her—which consisted of nothing less than a beautiful coronet of pure gold, set with flame-like rubies. Fiammetta, who had covered her face the first moment, looked pleased, and seeing a handsome young prince before her, soon laid aside her fears. She welcomed him kindly; and after a few days every one said the King might order the wedding robes to be made as quickly as he thought proper, and the court milliner could condescend to get them ready.

Fiammetta was very beautiful, as all princesses are; so it was natural that the Prince, who had heard of the foolish fancies of the people of Naples, but only laughed at them, should have his eyes often fixed upon her. She was standing alone one day before a great mirror in the hall, arranging her hair, when in came Florio quite silently. As he could not see her face, he peeped softly over her shoulder into the glass. What was his surprize, when Fiammetta shrieked out violently, and ran away without looking at him! In vain he called to her to stop; she rushed into her own room, screaming out to her old nurse, "He has the

'evil eye,' I know he has ; I saw it looking over my shoulder just now."

Florio for several days could not get a glimpse of the Princess, nor discover what it was that had frightened her. At last he bethought himself of the old nurse. He made her a present of a handsome set of beads, and this immediately loosened her tongue, and she told him that Fiammetta was sure that he had the 'evil eye,' and that she was determined never to see him again.

Florio, who had been taught to know, as I have said, that such superstitions as those of the Neapolitan people were not only fancies, but fancies as hurtful as they were foolish, directly made up his mind. He went to Alfonso, and said to him—

" Fiammetta, your lovely daughter, has hidden herself, and will not let me look on her beauty ; for she believes I have——"

" The 'evil eye,' " said his Majesty, interrupting him ; " I know it. Alas, what evil has that belief caused in my family !"

Florio was silent a moment. Then he said : " If I have the 'evil eye,' as Fiammetta thinks, she must also believe—for so her nurse has taught her—that even if she did not see me, even if I were in the dark, and looked at her, she would directly feel some dreadful shock or pain in consequence. Now persuade her to come with your Majesty into the Treasure vault

beneath the palace, and try whether it is so or not."

And then the Prince privately told his plan to the King. The King agreed, and went forth without delay to summon his daughter to go through this most formidable trial.

In a few minutes a page came to bring Florio the keys of the vault, the hollow, hollow vault, and to tell him to hide himself in it. He took up his place close to the door, and directly afterwards he heard the King and Fiammetta, who were talking on the steps as they came down towards him.

"I know I shall see him in the dark!" she cried.
"I know I shall feel his eyes on me!"

"If Florio does you any harm," said the King, "I promise my daughter, on my royal word, that he shall be shut up in this vault and never allowed to come out, or have anything to eat but dry bread and water."

This seemed to comfort Fiammetta very much, and in they came.

The King, as he had agreed with Florio, immediately closed the door, and took up his station with Fiammetta by his side without moving further. Indeed the vault was perfectly dark—for it had no windows—so that they could not venture on without danger. A slight rustling and moving was now heard at the opposite end of the chamber, and Fiammetta, fixing her eyes on the spot, screamed out at once—

"There he is! I see him! I see his fiery eyes looking right at me!" and she almost fainted with terror. But at that moment she heard a gentle, pleasant laugh and whisper at her ear; the door was flung open, and Florio, gently taking her hand, said—

"Was it indeed my eyes, dear Fiammetta, that glared at you? Am I indeed so terrible to look upon?" and as he spoke he pointed to the opposite side of the vault, whence the sound had proceeded.

Fiammetta blushed, smiled, and looked as he directed. Alfonso's page stood there, holding in his arms Fiammetta's own large, favourite, black cat, who was indeed staring full at her, and seemed as much frightened as her mistress, and with better reason.

Fiammetta now blushed again, and lifting up her eyes with some hesitation, looked steadily on the Prince's face.

"What is it that Fiammetta sees there?" said he, smiling rather confidently.

"If I see anything in your eyes, Florio," she replied, "it is no longer what is evil—unless," she added, whispering, "love for a foolish child, like Fiammetta, be an evil."

"Say, who once was a child, but, I am sure, is so no longer," said Florio, gently kissing her hand, and leading her again into open daylight.

Arthur made a little bow to the company present. The children, who had sat almost breathless with fear and expectation up to that moment, burst out into a cheerful laugh, and one of them asked, "What became of the black cat?" But before Arthur could begin the story of the black cat, Emily made him sit down, and took her place at the rosewood table.

EMILY'S FIRST TALE

THE PRINCESS LUISANTE

THE King of Hyrcania had one only daughter, of whose beauty he was extremely proud. And no one could say that she was not beautiful,—her long brown hair reached almost down to her ankles, her cheeks made the roses turn white with envy as she passed by (as you may still see in the garden), and her forehead was fairer than snowdrops. But for all that—or from all that—the Princess was excessively proud and haughty. And what she was most proud of was her eyes, which were so bright and piercing that whomsoever she chose to fix them on was immediately dazzled, as if he had been struck by lightning, and thenceforth for all the rest of his life remained in utter blindness. And it was on account of this magical power in her eyes that she was called the Princess *Luisante*, or *Shining*.

Many of the neighbouring princes had sought her in marriage, but none of them pleased her fancy. One was too tall, and she bid him fetch the moon down for her, as she had a mind to taste green cheese ; another was too short, and she begged him not to leave his stilts in the hall the next time she had the honour of seeing him ; a third was too thin, and she said she could hear the wind whistling through him ; and a fourth was too fat, so she called him the paviour's assistant, and told him to walk up and down the new road they were making in front of the palace. And so she sent them all away—some without even seeing her, and they were the most fortunate—and the rest blinded and miserable. And she declared that she would never marry any prince, except one who should be able to look her steadily in the face without fear or injury.

The King of Hyrcania was much grieved at his daughter's folly, although he admired her fine eyes ; but advise her as he might, he might as well have talked to the sun and the seven stars, so little attention did she pay him. And now all the kings and kings' sons began to say that Luisante was so cruel and proud, and that her pride, too, caused her to look so frightful, and so spoiled her beauty, that they would make her no offers of marriage, and that thus she would receive a just punishment.

So some time passed. But one evening it hap-

pened that as Luisante was lying on a couch in a pavilion or summer-house, within her father's garden, news was brought her that a stranger had arrived at the palace, and desired to see the Princess.

"To see me!" she cried: "and pray what may the name of this brave gentleman be?"

"The Prince Aquila," her maid replied: "I saw him at the gate. Let me bid him depart; he is not worthy to visit your Highness."

"I will see him for myself," said Luisante, proudly.

The stranger was a short but strong-looking man, with a black, frizzled beard, and bright, glancing eyes. On his head he wore a tall red cap, and when the princess came near he pulled it down over his forehead, and bowing low, said—

"Fair Princess, your servant is come to beg the honour which you have promised to grant him who can bear to look undazzled on your Highness's beauty."

Luisante laughed scornfully, and said—

"A blind prince, at least, shall never be the husband of Luisante."

Aquila bowed low again, and saying, "Next morning, your servant begs permission again to approach the fair Luisante," he left the palace.

"I wonder who this prince can be?" said Luisante, with some curiosity.

"He has not learned much from his visit," replied her maid.

But it was in truth a magical cap that Aquila wore, transparent as day to him, though even Luisante's eyes could not pierce it. And he saw through it that the Princess was even more beautiful and more proud than report had spoken of her. "But what a thing is pride," he said to himself, as he turned away; "how does it distort the face, and mar the gentleness of a woman! Could Luisante but see herself in her vanity, almost, methinks, would she pray for the gift of blindness."

I must now explain who this pretended prince really was. He was a very brave soldier of the King's body-guard, and as prudent and wise as he was courageous. And so, though so many had failed, he determined to try his fortune with Luisante. "Why may not I marry a princess, and be a king myself some day," he said, "like King Darius or the Emperor Agathamoirā? If I fail, why 'tis only loss of sight, and who knows whether next time I go to battle I may not be struck in the eye by an arrow? Better blind for a princess, than blind for a shot."

With these thoughts, he first went to consult the King. The King, who knew Aquila's courage and worth, was rejoiced at the thought of having so brave a son-in-law, and only feared lest in the attempt he might lose an excellent soldier; but he told him to go and prosper, and if he succeeded, he should find his courage well and worthily rewarded.

But how should Aquila guard himself against the lightning of Luisante's eyes? He thought and thought, but no plan could he fix on. At last he remembered an old fairy, whom the common people called Fada, and who lived on the edge of the great forest of Hyrcania. Late at night, Aquila stole to the mouth of her cave. It was very dark and gloomy; the wind whistled through the branches of the great trees, and Aquila's heart nearly failed him. But he thought again of Luisante, and going boldly on, he thrice called out—

“Fada! Fada! Fada!”

A voice asked him who he was, and what he needed.

“I am Aquila,” he said, “and I am here to ask aid from Fada, how I may gain the hand of the Princess Luisante.”

Immediately the fairy appeared, bending with age, her face carved into a thousand wrinkles, and her head covered with a tall red cap.

“Luck helps the brave,” she cried; and taking the cap from her head, she told him to pull it over his eyes. He did so, and to his surprize he saw everything through it more clearly than before. “The first day,” she said, “go with this cap on before Luisante, and judge for yourself whether she be beautiful or not.”

“I have watched over the Princess,” she continued,

“from her youth. She is proud ; but her pride arises from a foolish vanity in her own beauty, which she has been brought up to take pleasure in. How should such a princess know the truth, when every one about her tries to please her by flattering her? But if she were cured of this pride, Luisante would be a princess deserving the hand of a soldier.”

“There is nothing,” Fada added, “which makes any one more frightful than vanity. Pride spoils the most lovely face. I am an old woman, and some unkind neighbours say that I am ugly ; but I assure you I never was vain. If a vain person could but truly see herself, she would feel shame and grief at the sight ; but you see there is nothing worth looking at in an old woman like me.”

As Aquila said nothing, Fada went into the cave, and presently brought from it a mask, so made as to fit closely to the face. Aquila took the mask, and saw that two small crystal mirrors were fixed in it, in place of the eyes ; but that, still, light enough passed through to enable any one who wore it to direct his steps. “Put this mask on,” said Fada, “when you appear the second time before Luisante. Do not fear her eyes,” she said ; “it is in her own power, if she chooses, to take away the magical power from them by repeating a charm which I taught her in her childhood, and at that moment those whom she has rendered blind will recover their eyesight. But she

will not do this, unless she repents of her pride ; and if she does not repent, why you will find some nice girl who will be happy to marry so handsome a young soldier as you."

Aquila thanked Fada. "One thing more, however," she said : "if you present yourself in your own name, the Princess will not even come forth to meet you ; and so I counsel you to dress yourself as a prince. Young ladies always like a prince."

"Who knows," replied he, "what may happen ? The King has given his royal word that he will favour and reward me. And if I am to marry a princess, I must at least be a prince."

"Adieu, Prince Aquila," said Fada, retiring to her cave ; "and so, go—go—go, and good fortune go with you."

Next day, as I have already mentioned, Aquila presented himself at the palace, and satisfied himself, by the aid of the magical cap, of the beauty which even the vanity of Luisante could not entirely hide or do away with.

I now return to the course of the story. The morning after, having first carefully covered his face with the mask, he appeared at the gate. Luisante, astonished and enraged at his courage in daring twice to visit her, came out attended by her father and the court to meet him. Her face glowed with ten times her ordinary pride, and at the sight of the prince,

whose face was hidden in the strange mask, she smiled with a frightful scorn, and darted at him a look as withering as the lightning.

But, to her great surprize, Aquila stood unmoved. Not able to guess why the charm had failed, Luisante again firmly fixed her eyes on him. And now, catching sight of the crystal mirrors fixed in front of the magical cap, she stood motionless in her own turn; for in them she could not but see her own face, swollen with vanity, and darkened with pride, reflected back with terrible truth and power. It was herself in truth—her own mind, shining out through her face, that she saw—but not such as her flatterers had pictured to her. And so it was, that as the old fairy had said, a better spirit came over her; she cast her vain heart from her, and wished to be once more like a little child—modest, and humble, and loving. To the surprize of all who stood by, she sank down on one knee, and covering her face with her hands cried out—

“Pride, away! pride, away! pride, away!”

Aquila read well what was passing in her heart, and saw that the moment was come. He tore off the mask, and throwing himself at her feet, said—

“Fair Princess, fairest Luisante, see me, what I really am—no prince, but a poor soldier, who yet dares to gaze on you.”

She lifted up her eyes, and looked steadily on him;

but although I believe she smiled a little, yet it was a pleasant, humble kind of smile.

"I repent," she said. "Pride leads to a fall, but beauty is only with the humble;" and so saying, with the utmost gentleness, she offered him her hand, which he reverently clasped in his own.

"Ah, unworthy!" he cried, "most unworthy of an honour so great; yet worthy, if so you think it."

The King, who had looked on all that passed with extraordinary pleasure, now stepping forward, placed his sword on Aquila's shoulder, and saying, "Rise up, Prince Aquila," again joined his hand in that of the Princess.

"I am yours," said Luisante, as she rose up, gently but firmly. "I am yours—prince or no prince; you have conquered in one battle more. And henceforth I disarm my eyes of their magic power, for I am yours. My word has been given that it should be so; and I am"—she added with a smile—"too proud to take it back again."

Mrs. Wentworth smiled also at the conclusion of Emily's tale, and, turning to Arthur, said—

"It is indeed a very pretty story; it might have been called the New Narcissus—might it not?"

"No, mamma," cried Lucy, "for in my Catechism of Mythology it is said that Narcissus pined away and turned into a flower (there is a long word there,

but I can't recollect it) from looking at his own reflection in the water ; but you know the Princess was cured by seeing herself in the glass."

"I wish I had anything so pretty to tell," sighed Charles ; "but I know next to nothing about fairies. I never even saw one."

"Never mind, my dear boy," said Mrs. Wentworth ; "remember, luck helps the brave."

CHARLES' FIRST TALE

ADELA'S DREAM

ADELA was in general a very good little girl. She had been early taught to be so by her mother, who saw in her little daughter the high and happy spirits of her own youth brought again before her eyes. If Adela did wrong, it was her want of thought rather than her want of obedience which was to blame ; and when a fault had been once clearly pointed out to her, she generally did not do it again, at least for several days. Yet there was one bad habit which her mother found it difficult to cure, and that was, a certain carelessness with regard to the feelings of animals, which sometimes led her into real, though unintentional, cruelty.

One fine summer's morning, Adela went out as

usual to play in the garden. She ran from flower to flower, carefully—almost respectfully—looking at and smelling them, till from one of the tall lily-cups there flew out a beautiful coloured butterfly. Adela stretched out her hands to catch it. Something in her heart whispered to her, “Let it alone; it has done you no harm; you can only harm it.” If she had been wise she would have turned away; but still she looked and looked on, till the longing became too strong for her to resist; and she took hold of the tiny insect. Its little feathers powdered her fingers with fine, ruby dust: she thought she would gather it together and carry it into the house for her doll’s dinner. Meanwhile the butterfly struggled as it could for liberty, and at last succeeded in getting off. Adela ran hastily after it, and, I am sorry to say, was cruel enough to knock the little thing to the ground with her handkerchief, giving it a blow which took away its life; and then, without feeling sorry for what she had done, she proceeded to carry it home in triumph.

At the house-door she met her mother standing. “What have you there, dear child?” said she. Adela was too truthful to attempt to hide what she had done; and she held up the dead butterfly to her mother without venturing to speak a word. “Cruel child,” said she, much grieved at her little daughter’s thoughtlessness. “Do you not know its life was as dear to it as your own is to you? Go to your room,

Adela—I have spoken to you several times of this before—and do not come out of it till the afternoon. I hope in the meanwhile you will learn to feel very sorry for what you have done."

"Indeed I am very sorry—very—already," said poor Adela, bursting into tears, and then at once hastening off in obedience to her mother's orders. It was a hot summer's day, and Adela laid the dead insect carefully on the window-seat, in hopes that the sun's rays might warm it back to life. Then, sitting down on the edge of her little bed, she thought over her own cruelty and her mamma's words. And presently (for she was wearied with tears) she leaned her head back, without knowing it, on the pillow, her eyelids closed, and a strange dream came into her mind as she lay softly sleeping.

She thought she was sitting on the lawn in the garden where she had just been playing. From amongst the tall lilies a beautiful form stepped forth, all dressed in the fairest ruby and azure tints, as if she had been dipped in the rainbow. "Fear not," said she to Adela, who tried to escape, but found herself as it were chained to the spot; "I am the fairy Farfaletta, and I am come to change you from your present shape, in order that you may learn better what those brute creatures are amongst whom mankind live, and may know that they also should be treated with love and reverence."

"But shall I ever be a little girl again?" said Adela, timidly.

"When you have passed the appointed season; meantime, pay good heed to what you see, that you forget it not," answered the fairy, touching Adela gently with her wand.

Immediately Adela felt a curious change come over her; a heat and a tingling ran through her shoulders, and presently well-feathered wings sprang out from them. Her bright young eyes, though altered in shape and size, yet remained to her; and with them she could perceive that the lilies on the lawn had grown to the size and stature of tall forest trees. An irresistible upward desire seized her; she seemed to walk the air; and as she hovered over the flowers with the beautiful ivory bill with which she was now provided, she could draw the honey from their cups. But she still (such was her dream) kept as before her human mind and feelings; and she knew that she had become one of an innumerable colony of larks whose nests were scattered over the nearest corn-fields. She flew from flower to flower: now tasting the sweets they contained, now relieving them from the little beetles and other insects which seemed to her to fret and spoil their beauty. Adela could snap these little things up with her bill quite easily. She found them much better eating than she had expected.

But presently a new feeling came over her. She

flapped her wings, and in a moment rising into the air, she found herself at a vast height above the ground. People go up as high as she went in balloons, but they cannot see very much of the landscape over which they float. Yet, though almost among the clouds, to Adela's surprise, she could now distinctly make out, not only the general shape and appearance of the earth beneath her, but even the smallest insects that ran over its surface. For of all living creatures, birds are said to have the keenest sight. She darted down on a worm which was creeping beneath, and carried it off in triumph to a nest, woven together of roots, and grass, and twigs, which lay near, hidden at the bottom of the tall wheat-straws.

"Welcome, sweet little wife," cried a lark who seemed to be watching by it, in a language which she could now understand, as though it had been hers from childhood. "How long the time has been! Now come and do a mother's part! I have been sitting on the eggs till I am quite cold; and then I am so much afraid of breaking them!" And with these words her mate, rising, displayed five tiny, tiny eggs—on which she took her place without a moment's hesitation.

"You have been long away from our nest," said he. "I feared lest some evil might have befallen my little one; I did not know what to think."

Adela tried to explain that she had never seen the bird before, and who and what she really was. But she soon found that she was unable to make him understand the change which she had undergone. He would not believe that she had not been his companion since St. Valentine's, and she presently submitted herself with perfect patience to what she saw must be a law and rule of what had happened to her.

"If you have picked up breakfast," said he, "I will leave you a while, and try to find something nice for myself. When the sky falls, we shall catch beetles, you know, as the proverb says; meantime, we must seek them for ourselves."

And with these words he spread his wings, and flew off. The young mother sat at her post, and kept the eggs warm with the utmost care, till sounds, high above her, caused her to turn her quick head upwards. There, in the bright blue sky, though our eyes could not, yet she could see her mate, hung above her on his wings, shaking from his throat a perfect shower of song: dancing and throwing himself over with joy in the solitude of the glorious light of heaven: looking down with his clear eyes on his home beneath, and singing as he looked; till silent at last, as if satisfied with the closing sweetness.

Adela looked up at the lark, and admired him. "We too, the birds," she thought, "love with the

love which mankind too boldly claim as their own. They have houses, and we have nests; they have babies, and we have nestlings; they have railways, and we have wings; the difference is not so great as some people fancy." And then as she slept she murmured to herself some beautiful words of a great poet :

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit !
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest :
Like a cloud of fire
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

What thou art we know not :
What is most like thee ?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower.

For a moment the sound of her own voice roused Adela. She woke : and looking round, saw the bright sun streaming in through the roses that overhung the window—through the golden green leaves of the vine, and through the chequered wicker-work of the cage in which her doves sat murmuring. It was mid-day in the world, and she was a little girl. . . . And then again sleep rolled over her soul, and the dream held its course as before.

And, as she gazed upwards, the bird, her mate, that floated above her, changing his sweet song into a sharp note, as of warning, dropped suddenly through the air towards the nest. But before he could reach it, Adela felt something like a cloud overshadow her, and in a moment found herself a fast prisoner in the nets of a birdcatcher. Her mate, with one piercing cry, mounted into the air, and was soon lost even to her eyesight, though she heard—or thought she heard—his last parting words borne down towards her from the immeasurable distance.

“Farewell, dearest : it is the end ! I know it. Never again shall I hear thy sweet song. Never again shall we share the pleasant labours of the nest. Thou art fallen into the hands of man, the tyrant, the oppressor ; he will keep thee as his slave and his toy ; for cunning is in his hand, and cruelty in his heart. But why—ah, why should it be so ?”

And then the dream changed ; and Adela found

herself a prisoner within a wicker cage, that was hung from the window of the very nursery in which she had been herself brought up. Children were playing there; and from time to time they ran up to the cage, to give their bird lumps of sugar, and fresh grass to rest or to feed on. They called each other by little nursery names, which seemed familiar to her ears; and amongst them she could recognize her own. "Dela! Dela!" cried one; "you must not go to the cage: mamma says no. She says you will torment and hurt our pretty lark. She cannot trust you near it." Eagerly she looked at the child thus spoken to; but a mist seemed drawn before its little face, so that she could not see it. "They are not so cruel, after all," thought she. "My mate was mistaken;" and then she hopped from perch to perch, and sang her brightest little song in sign of thankfulness and love to her new owners. It did not seem so bad to be in a cage, after all.

But presently all the children but two were called from the room. One of these came up at once to the cage, opened the little door, and caught hold of the lark, who fluttered and beat its wings in an agony of fear.

"Oh Adela! Adela!" screamed the other, "what are you doing?"

"Look here, Car," cried she, "I have caught the lark: see how pretty she is."

“You will kill her—you will kill her,” answered Caroline, running up: “see how her eye glances, and her wings tremble! You will kill her with fright.” And in truth the child, though without meaning it, handled her prisoner very roughly: for little hands are not always gentle hands. “Do put her back into the cage, *dear* Adela, do!”—but Adela would not. And then Caroline tried to snatch the bird from her sister. It was kindly meant, but in the struggle the poor lark was hardly used—her feathers ruffled, and one of her wings nearly broken.

When the children saw what they had done they burst into tears, and quickly laying down the bird on the soft grass at the bottom of the cage, they went up to the window and looked out sadly into the garden. The warm sun shone upon the lark; and presently recovering herself, though with pain and difficulty, she raised up her head and looked for the children in fear. But suddenly her quick sight—so much keener than our own—showed her in the distance a danger of which the children were not aware. It was a hawk, who, drawn onwards by the sun glittering upon the glass, was making his way rapidly towards the window. “Poor little things,” thought the lark, forgetting the ill-usage she had received, “it is flying at them: it sees their bright eyes, no doubt, and it will pluck them out and kill them;” and with that she flew from side to side of the cage, uttering her most

piercing notes, in order to awaken them to a knowledge of their danger. What would she not have given for a human voice, to speak to them and give them warning! She tried so hard that it seemed nearly coming. But this could not be.

"What ails the poor bird?" said Caroline, turning to the cage; while her sister remained unmoved, looking sullenly forth, and resting her hands on the arms of a little wheelbarrow which her mother had given her to carry plants and stones with in the garden. And now every moment the hawk, wheeling round and round in great circles, drew near; till at last, making a sudden dart, it flew straight forward with a loud whirr at the child's face. She started back, and with a scream instinctively raised the wheelbarrow before her; the hawk rushed violently against it, and in the fury of his flight actually drove his beak deep and firm within the wood. There came a little round lump on the other side of it, so violently had it been struck by the hawk's horny beak.

And so the child was saved—she scarce knew how. The lark shook her wings with joy, and poured out a song of thankfulness at the wonderful escape.

"Dear little bird," cried they, coming to the cage, "she meant to warn us; she saw the hawk, no doubt: what shall we do to please her?"

"I will fetch her another lump of sugar," said Adela.

"No, I know what will be kindest," answered Caroline.

"What is that?"

"I will let her go. I am sure she had rather not be kept locked up in this cage, but fly abroad with the other birds at liberty."

"Oh no—no," cried her sister, "indeed—indeed I cannot let her go: I am sure she will not know what to do with herself! I am sure it is much best for her to be our little prisoner! I will be so kind to her."

"I am sure mamma would wish us to let the bird go," answered Caroline, thoughtfully. "You know she was not pleased when Henry brought it us."

"Well—mamma always says what is right," said her sister; and then, as if a bright thought struck her,—“we will spread crumbs on the window-sill, and the lark will come back every day and eat them, and so she will still be our little sister."

"Good-bye, sister," said Caroline, letting the bird fly.

With an immense long note of pleasure the lark sprang through the window, mounted high in the air, and presently, perceiving her nest, dropped down upon it. Her mate, who was sitting disconsolate, flapped his wings and rose to meet her.

"I never thought to see my love," said he; "how has she escaped from man, the tyrant?"

"They are not all such as you think them," answered Adela, telling her adventure. "They are not all such as you think them. Not knowing what we really are, if they ill-treat us it is mostly from ignorance: if they are cruel, it is from thoughtlessness."

And on this Adela awoke with a sudden start, and knew that it was a dream, and yet not all a dream.

"I have never such dreams as that," said Lucy Wentworth.

"Why, how can we tell what we dream of when we are asleep," answered Arthur, "unless we slept with our eyes open?"

"I never thought of that," said she; "and yet, you must be laughing at me, Arthur, for you know we *do* dream sometimes."

"No doubt, Lucy—and sometimes, as I said, with our eyes open. But we may, in truth, have many dreams which we cannot remember, and I should think that very probably it is so. For, in fact, we only say that we dream, when we recollect our dreaming."

"Is what you said of the quickness of the sense of vision in birds really true, Charles?" asked Mrs. Wentworth.

"I believe so. No bird whatever is said to be without eyes ; whilst among animals there are the mole, and one or two beside."

"Why is the poor mole blind?" said Lucy.

"That's more than I can see," answered Charles.

Mrs. Wentworth here observing that Eleanor, the next speaker, was not quite ready for her task, said there was a little Arabian tale on the subject, which she would repeat meanwhile.

"Pray do," said Eleanor, looking much relieved, "and make it as long as possible."

"Take it as it stands," replied the lady, "and be content.

"Adam and Eve had been cast forth from Paradise, and lived by the labour of their hands on the plain of Shinar. Chancing to burrow his way one evening beneath their cottage, the mole looked up and watched them as they rested from labour. And then wickedness arose in the heart of the mole, and hastening to the Throne of God, he cast himself at its foot, and said—

"Let the creature Thou hast made tell Thee of what he has seen on earth.

"I was in Adam's cottage, and there I saw the man whom Thou hast made, with Eve, the woman, that they knelt down and prayed to an image that they had formed and set before them. Now,

therefore, let them be punished for their wickedness ; for they have turned aside from Thee, to worship idols.'

"On which the Voice answered—

"'Adam also, and Eve, are ever in My sight, and I saw them kneeling before the cradle of their firstborn child, the son whom I have given them ; and their words were the words of prayer and of thanksgiving. Know, therefore, thy pride and thy presumption, for God seeth the ways of man, his righteousness and his sin, and concealeth it ; the neighbour seeth it not, and proclaimeth it aloud.'

"And for this it was, say they, that God punished the pride of the mole, and set it to work evermore below the earth, dark, and in blindness.

"Such a tale," Mrs. Wentworth added, "is, no doubt, in our ears, strange and foreign in its language, but it will not, I think, appear irreverent or idle to those who know Whose eyes are on them."

Eleanor was ready by this time ; she took her place, and without further delay, in a low, gentle voice, she began her story.

ELEANOR'S FIRST TALE

BLIND MARGARET

THE story that I am to tell, such as it is, is one that I often heard from an old woman who lived close to my Papa's parsonage. She used to repeat it to me so frequently, that I almost know it by heart, and so you must let me try to give it you in her own words, for she was a very fair-spoken old lady.

"I can see now very well, Miss Eleanor," she used to say, putting up her spectacles, "but I could not see so once, and when I was as old as you are, I did not even know what seeing meant. Indeed, it was a long time before I knew that I was blind, or that there was any difference between myself and others. I knew I could not find my way about as my father and mother did; but then I only thought 'it was because they were older and better, and that when I grew up, I should be as they were; and so it was, I thank God, but not in the way which I thought for."

I used to ask old Margaret, (continued Eleanor,) what her earliest recollections were, out of a childish curiosity which I see now was not very considerate;

but she always answered me readily and cheerfully. "I remember my father taking me on his knees," she would say, "and drawing my little hand down over his face, that I might know him again, as he said. And so for a long time I had all sorts of strange thoughts, Miss. I used to fancy his nose was the most important part—the best part of his face, because I could feel it best. And when I touched his eyes (but this was after I knew what being blind meant) he would say, 'Ah, poor dear, if God in His mercy would give her back hers.' And I told him that I felt nothing where my eyes were, and that if I could ever see, I knew it would be through the tips of my fingers.

"God, indeed, is very merciful to the blind, Miss," Margaret used to say, "and has given them senses where others have not. I could tell any one again, who had been once in the cottage, by the sound of their movement, even before they spoke, and my fingers used to be almost as good as eyes to me. It was so that I first learnt to read. I have heard somewhere of a little girl, who was learnt to read by being shown the letters on her mother's grave-stone. My dear mother was alive, but there were many tombs in the churchyard, and the letters cut into the stone, you know, Miss, were of such use to me that she would thank God for having provided such handy books for her poor blind child to read by. She guided my fingers

along the lines, and so I learnt my letters, one by one, as quickly, I do believe, as if I had seen them ; and many texts of Scripture I thus read, and they have stayed engraven, if I may say so, on my mind from that day forward.

“ But I am telling you all these trifles, Miss,” she would continue, “ and I must go on to the rest of my poor story, such as it is. My father heard, that at a town many miles from where we then lived, near Sherborne, there was a very famous doctor, who had cured many blind people, and that he was so kind as to operate, as they called it—to operate—I mind the word well—on all poor persons, without asking money, for charity’s sake. But the place was many miles off, and I was too young to walk ; and my mother, too, she said she must go and see what they would do to her poor blind lamb,—so she used to call me then, Miss,—and we did not know how to find money wherewith to pay our journey.

“ But so God would have it, as I was sitting alone in our cottage one day, knitting (for I had been taught to do that betimes), that a gentleman came in and asked if I could shew him the way towards Gloucester. *Oh, that is where the blind Doctor lives*, I cried out. The gentleman started, and then, I suppose, he saw that I was blind ; and he asked my story, and pitied me, and put some money carefully into my hands, which he said would pay to take us all there.

"So we soon set out for Gloucester. When we got there, I was taken into the doctor's house, and as I went through the passage, I heard a child screaming out with joy, *Oh, it is so nice to have eyes—nice new eyes!* and I laughed and felt happier than I ever had before, though all the while I trembled and shook from not knowing what was about to happen to me. Well, at last, I was taken to the room where the doctor was. He came up to me, and then I heard him go and whisper something to my father, but I could not hear what. Oh, how I wished I could see, that I might look at his face, and find whether he seemed comforted or not by what he heard! But I shall tire you, Miss Eleanor," said Margaret.

"Not at all," I said, "but tell me how you felt when the operation was over, and you first began to see."

"It was over in a minute, and did not hurt much, and then I looked for my mother first, and you will laugh, Miss, but I could not make it out at all. She was standing by the window, hardly daring, I think, to look at what was going on, and I thought she was growing to the trees that I saw through it (I knew they must be trees, though I could hardly tell why). And the trees, and she, and the room, and everything seemed quite close together, and covered with all manner of colours. My father and mother looked very different—much smaller—than I had thought

they would look. They looked like what I had fancied children would be, and moved about so that it quite distracted me—indeed, it was not for some time that I really knew what colour, and size, and distance meant. This took me over by surprise, I may say, at first; but afterwards I understood, when I came to think of it, that we have to learn the use of our eyes, like as of our feet and our fingers: but it was a lesson, I thank God, that I was not long in learning.

“But oh, Miss,” said Margaret, “there was one such a sad sight—it makes my tears come even now to think on it! After the first time I had been there, the good doctor told me to come back to his house in a few days, that he might see whether my eyes needed any further healing or no. But, thank God, they gained their strength apace, and when I went again to see him, it was only to thank him for his charity and kindness to a poor creature, such as I was, Miss Eleanor. But as I came up to the door, I bethought me that I heard a voice withinside, as of some one weeping and wailing, and I said to myself, it was a child, poor thing, crying for the pain which the sharp iron lancets gave it. But when I tapped at the door, and was come in, there was a young lady standing, and her eyes were covered with a green bandage, and by her stood her mother, and she it was whose voice I had heard without.

“‘Do not grieve for me,’” she said (for the words have been often by me since, Miss, when I have been sick or ready to fret myself), ‘Do not grieve for me, mother, dearest. If I am to be blind for the rest of my days, it is God’s will, and so it is very good. Do we not say, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*, dear mother?’—and then she looked up at the lady with her poor blind face, till I almost wished, Miss, that I myself had not been able to see her—‘and He will give me light within—enough to walk in His ways, I trust, till He takes me where there is everlasting light with Him, if so it be His pleasure.’

“But her mother, like Rachel, whom we read of in the Holy Scripture, would not be comforted. She said to the doctor, that he was a cruel, wicked man, to have put her sweet Louisa to such pain, and for no good after all; but he bore it patiently, Miss, and said only,—

“‘Health, like sickness, is in higher hands, ma’am. Man proposes, but God disposes. Such as my art and skill are, trust me, madam, I have done all. Believe me, none can feel the misery of such failure so deeply as one who attempts a cure, and finds it beyond him.’ But maybe I do not speak his words rightly, Miss, for he was a learned man, and it is now many years over.”

I begged Margaret not to trouble herself on this

account, but to tell me, if she were not weary, all that she could remember.

“I have little more to say, Miss Eleanor,” she answered. “Oh yes—there was one thing more. For the young lady, who stood by leaning against a chair, as quiet as any lamb—and you would have prayed God, Miss, to bless her gentle face—the young lady stretched forth her hand to the doctor (for she knew where he was by his voice, you see), and when he took her hand in his, she said, ‘Be sure, sir, that I thank you deeply for your kindness, and I know that you have done all that you could for me. And indeed I suffered very little—nothing almost—except perhaps just then when I saw the light for a moment,’ she said, and she stopped for a twinkling; and then she spoke out—ah, so gaily, Miss Eleanor, so cheerily, that I almost started to hear her: ‘But I am truly making you the patient in my place, sir; you will think me the most tedious visitor you have ever had; and so many waiting for the benefit of your skill. So let me wish you a good morning,’ she said; and then, with a light step, leaning on her mother’s arm, she left the room. But the doctor said not a word, Miss, for some minutes, nor did we neither.”

(“Many other curious things Margaret told me,” continued Eleanor, “but I thank you for your patience, and keep them back for some other day.”

“Oh, tell us them now—tell us,” cried the children.

“Well, as you like it,” said she, gently.)

You remember the gentleman who gave Margaret the money by aid of which she was able to travel to the doctor at Gloucester? Well, a strange thing, almost like what we read of in story-books and novels, happened about *him*. He was more generous, I suppose, than wise; for at last he gave away or lost all his money, and travelled about the country almost like a beggar. Margaret had married, and gone to live near Stroud, when one day she heard that a robbery had taken place in the neighbourhood—a farmhouse it was, I believe, had been entered and some money carried away. On some point of the law, Margaret and her husband were called to the Court as witnesses. What was her surprize, when, on entering the room, she saw her friend—for she knew him at once by his voice—standing before the magistrate, and endeavouring to defend himself on the subject of the robbery, with which he was charged.

It turned out that he had been wandering in the neighbourhood at that very time; and as he could or would give no account of himself—for he was a strange, wild character—and had more money about him than would have been expected from his dress and appearance, he had been taken up and brought before the Court on suspicion.

He tried to explain who he was—that he was not a mere beggar and vagrant, but had once been a man of

money and rank. His story seemed so strange that no one believed it; and there was no person in that part of the country who had seen him before, or could speak a word for him.

At last Margaret's turn to be examined came, and she was placed in the witness-box.

"I knew him directly by his voice," she said; "but of course that would not have been enough to make proof to the magistrate that he was the same person who had once given me the money, and who had told me who he was. But by God's good providence it was that a thought came into my head, Miss Eleanor.

"I spoke out to the magistrate what I have told you, Miss: that I was sure he was really what he said he was; and that if so, I knew that beneath the middle finger of his right hand, if they looked, they would find a cut, or scar, in the skin. You mind, Miss, what I said about my fingers when I was blind, and I had felt this scar when he put the money into my hand, and now I called to mind all about it as clear as daylight.

"And then I shall never forget it, Miss Eleanor, to my dying day; for the magistrate told the prisoner to hold up his hand, and there, Miss, there was the mark of the cut just as I had said.

"'You have spoken the truth, Margaret,' said the magistrate; 'it is a false charge; a groundless charge,

I am *convinced*, that has been brought against this person. Let him go free from the Court ; he is an innocent man.'

"We took him home to our poor cottage," said Margaret, "for he was glad of a bit of food, and a roof to his head to cover him ; and he lived with us for many days, and many strange tales he told us (for he was a great traveller) of what had happened to him since he had given the money in charity, many years since, to the poor blind girl—and that was me, Miss, as you see," concluded Margaret.

"Oh, do tell us them !—do tell us them now !" cried the children again.

"Not now," said Eleanor, smiling ; "it is Anna's turn next."

"But is it all really true?" said one of the little boys, with a very serious air.

"All—yes—really, quite true," replied she, making way for the next story-teller.

• ANNA'S FIRST TALE

EYES AND NO EYES

“IT is a new story with an old name that I have to tell you,” said Anna; “but I hope you may like it none the worse for that. If you do, I shall think you very unreasonable.”

There were once two children, who lived in the great street of the city of Bagdad, in Persia. There was a year's difference in age between them; but they looked much alike: they were nearly of one height, and their hair was of the same colour. And no one, on seeing them for the first time, would have guessed that whilst the one was gifted with peculiarly clear and long sight, the other could scarcely see an inch beyond him.

But it was on this account that their mother, who was a widow woman, and so weak in health that she never left her bed, used to call the elder boy, by way of nickname, Eye—the younger, No Eye. And when the little one complained at this, and was ready to cry for thinking he was not so well gifted by nature as his brother, his mother to comfort him would say, what is, I believe, a truth, that his eyes would always

improve as he grew up, and would probably outlast his brother's when age should fall on both of them.

Opposite the widow's house lived a barber, the most ill-tempered man in all Bagdad. The children used to call him Redpoll, because he wore a little close wig, with a scarlet patch on the hinder part; and in their foolish way—for their mother was not able, from her illness, to take a mother's care of them—they would even shout the nickname out as they ran by the barber's shop. This would drive him into a dreadful passion, and he vowed, whenever the time should come, he would have his revenge upon them for it.

At last, one day, as they were playing in the street, it came into their heads to climb up the ledge of the open shop window—for they have no glass in those countries—and to peep within. Now the barber happened that morning to be without his wig.

"There is Redpoll," shouted the eldest boy, as soon as he saw him, "without his redpoll on!" and directly jumping down, they both ran away.

Out rushed the barber, as the wasps do when you stir up their nests, and catching them before they could escape into their own home, dragged them by the hair into his shop.

"I'll Redpoll you! I'll see what the Cadi has to say to you," he cried. "What are your names, you little villains? Tell me this moment!"

"Eye," cried one.

“No Eye!” cried the second, quite innocently, for they knew no other.

“I!” shouted the barber, “I knew that before, but you are not I, that I can tell you. *Know why*,” he cried—for though not naturally witty, yet rage made him, as it has made many others, into a maker of bad puns for the moment—turning to the other, “Yes, I’ll *know why*, and you shall *know why* before we have done,” and he ran to fetch his cudgel from off the window-ledge. Anger, they say, makes us blind; and so it was with the barber. In his passion he fancied that there was one wig less than there should be in the window.

“Oh, I see what it was now,” he cried, while the children stood trembling before him; “I know who the thieves are who steal my wigs. I *know why*. Yes, it is very well; you may smile now; but I’ll let the Cadi know of it too.”

And without a moment’s delay he dragged them through the back of his shop, into a little court behind, and so out by some narrow streets to the Hall of Justice.

It was the afternoon: and the Cadi, who was a fat, good-natured looking man, was leaning back, half asleep, in his great marble chair. Right over his head was engraved a text from the Koran of Mahomet, on Justice; and all round the hall, which was very lofty, were similar carvings, after the fashion of

Mahommedan buildings. On his right hand sat the Mollah, a learned man who expounded the law in cases of difficulty; and in the hall below were crowds of the people of Bagdad, who having nothing to do, came in to hear how justice was administered.

"Well, what have we now, in the Prophet's name?" exclaimed the Cadi, as the barber, looking as fierce as a barber can, marched in, driving before him the two unfortunate children.

The barber stated his case, and swore that he had seen the children steal his wig—a wig with a blue patch behind; he should know it again anywhere—and carry it off, no doubt to hide it, as he had not seen it again from that moment.

"What are your names?" said the Cadi, looking fierce in his turn.

"Eye," and "No Eye," said the children.

"I and No I," cried the Cadi, smiling in spite of himself; "I and No I. Why, then, how is it, Mollah? it is a case for you."

The Mollah opened a large volume of the laws, and looked sternly at the children.

"I and No I, did you say?" continued the Cadi; "why then," pointing to the eldest, "you are I—and I am not I: and so I must be you. But if I am you, why I must be I—so it is, I must be I—so you must be not I. But there are two of you. So if you are No I, that little one must be I. But then,

again, I am sure that I am I—at least I think so. So he must be No I, as he said: and you must be you. Is it not so, Mollah? What says the Law?”

“It is as your Brightness decides,” said the Mollah.

“But it is a serious business,” said the Cadi. “I and No I, it is indeed—and if there is no witness on your side, I must believe the word of this honest man, the khâsterâsh,” (which, as you know, is the Persian name for a barber.)

The children were so frightened that they could not speak. They knelt down and gazed upwards, as if asking the protection of Heaven against the tyranny of men. Suddenly a light seemed to fill the elder boy's eyes; he looked steadily to the top of the building, and in a clear voice, as if reading something, said—

“Allah said, Let justice be done to the weak: and, Let not children be condemned without witnesses.”

“Where hast thou learnt this?” said the Mollah.

“Is it not written above?” said the child—and pointed to one of the texts engraven beneath the roof of the hall of justice, at the farthest end of the building.

“A miracle, in the Prophet's name—it is a miracle,” cried the Mollah, “for no eye of man could read the letters. I myself, O Cadi, though called in Bagdad the Hawkeyed, can scarcely discern one word from another, so great is the distance.”

The Cadi looked upwards, but he likewise was unable to read the text.

"May the shadow of your Brightness' beard never be less," said the barber, who stood on the Cadi's left hand, angrily turning towards him, "but these are the stories of children."

At this moment a shout of laughter was heard from the crowd. "Silence, in the Prophet's name!" exclaimed the Cadi; but he too was compelled to laugh, when he saw the younger child, who was a careful observer of anything near him, point significantly to a blue patch on the very wig the barber was wearing.

And so it was: the barber, on seeing the children, feeling his head bare, had snatched up the wig he thought they had stolen, from the table where it was lying, and put it on unconsciously. And his passion had since made him so blind, that he had never been aware of what he had done; and that he had himself committed the theft with which he charged the children.

The case was clear. "Take Eye and No Eye home," said the Cadi to an officer of the court, with all the gravity he could muster, "and present them each with a gold mohur (which I daresay is worth at least as much as a sovereign)—for such is the law of the Prophet when any have been unjustly accused. But take the barber," he continued, "to the hatim or

executioner,—take the barber, and, uncovering the soles of his feet, let him receive forty stripes—for so also has the Prophet ordered.”



The children and the barber were removed. “And,” concluded the Cadi, turning to the Mollah, “that what has now been done may be ever held in remembrance, send for a skilful workman, and let him carve on the walls of the court, so that all may read it,—

Allah giveth clear sight to man,
But his anger blindeth him.”

"Well done," said Mrs. Wentworth, giving her hand to Anna as she completed her tale. "And now, children, guess—what one thread is it, as the Cadi might have said, which runs through all the stories you have heard this afternoon?"

The children looked puzzled: but as they were thinking, Lucy, who had hidden herself behind the sofa, suddenly called out in a feigned voice—

"Hear the words of wisdom, that proceed from the mouth of the Mollah of Bagdad."

"Who is it? who is it?" shouted all the rest, half believing that the Mollah himself was among them.

"It is only *I*," cried Lucy, showing her face. Every one laughed as they heard her.

"Except when children are in a passion—which they never ought to be," said Mrs. Wentworth, "I cannot encourage punning on my premises."

"I can promise you, in the name of the rest, that it shall not often happen," answered Arthur with a smile. And they ran off to finish the evening with Hide-and-Seek and Blindman's Buff in the conservatory.

END OF THE FIRST DAY





THE NEW DANAIDES

SECOND DAY

They that with the soul can hear,
Let them to our tales give ear.

THE wet weather of the first day continued through the next,—so that the Grange party naturally looked forward with interest to the announcement of the afternoon. Many guesses were made by those not in the secret, as to what the subject of the tales was to be. But the story-tellers only looked wise and mysterious.

When the due time came, Charles, collecting the band, led them into the drawing-room. As they entered, the sound of music welcomed them. Arthur was standing by the pianoforte : whilst Anna struck the first notes of the graceful symphony which introduces Mozart's famous Air in praise of the Power of Music.

These were the words sung whilst the children ranged themselves in order, and Emily took her place at the table.

Sweet Bells, ring on ever, for gaily ye chime :
 Tra ra la la, &c.
 Our heart leaps to hear you : our blood beats in time.
 Tra ra la la, &c.

Duet. Through the year all happy days
 Of your music borrow :
 Yet your voice, that cries rejoice,
 Brings a touch of sorrow.
 'Tis your old familiar strain
 That awakes the past again.

Dear remember'd faces rise,
 Days of infant pleasure ;
 Joys that set, but left us yet
 Cheerful in our measure.
 Sweet Bells, &c.

EMILY'S SECOND TALE

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

THE ancient Greeks and Romans, whom we read of in our histories, were young children once, and had their dolls and fairy stories as we have ; and it is one of these stories which I am now going to tell you.

Orpheus and Eurydice were king and queen of the land of Thrace. Orpheus was a good king, and though the people of that country were at first very wild and savage, yet by the wise laws he gave and the order which he brought in among them, he soon

softened their rude ways and taught them to be lovers of peace and harmony.

But not only was Orpheus a good king ; he was also a most skilful and wonderful musician. So soon as he touched his harp, every one within hearing was forced to stand still and listen, as if enchanted : nay, the very wild beasts of the forest would come out and gather round him, and stand, as they stood of old in the garden of Eden, in peace and harmlessness. The colts stood still in the meadow, the stag put aside his fears, the monkey forgot to chatter, and the lion to roar—unless it were a deep bass note now and then, which he threw in where he thought it was wanted by the harmony, like a middle-aged lover of music at the opera. And when Orpheus had finished his song, they would all go back in order to their lairs, and lay them down in quiet.

You will easily fancy that Queen Eurydice loved to hear Orpheus play ; and she would come and sit beside him, and sing to the sound of his harp, till the sun himself was ready to stand still, and the stars to come down from their golden thrones, to listen to that music. We never hear anything of the kind now. And one day she begged Orpheus to take her with him to the forest, that she might see with her own eyes the wild beasts come forth and range themselves about him : for she had been told that it was so. Orpheus said yes—only requiring that even if she

were terrified at the sight, she should remain quietly by him, for else he could not say what might not befall her.



Then the King and Queen went out, and, sitting down by the wood, Orpheus touched his harp. Immediately the lions, and the wolves, and the bears came out of their hiding-places to listen to the wonderful tune. Eurydice's heart began to fail her at the sight; but she remembered her promise, and remained quiet. At last a huge lion, who was called the King of the Forest, came slowly marching forth, lashing his sides

with his tail, and moving, moving on to where Orpheus was sitting. Then Eurydice could no longer conquer her fear; she rose up and ran hastily towards the river Hebrus, which rolled close by. In vain Orpheus entreated her to return and not to fear, for whilst he played, no harm could happen to her. On she ran, till in the thick moist grass by the river side, a snake that was lying hid, lifted up his head and stung her foot as she trod beside him. Eurydice shrieked and fell; and when Orpheus ran up to give her help, he found her lying cold and dead on the grass, while the blood oozed from the wound in her heel, where she had been bitten by the serpent.

What should he do? where should he turn himself? All the happiness of his life had fled with his Eurydice. For days and days he sat on the river's edge, singing mournfully as he touched the strings of his harp, which was now his only comfort. The mountains around, Rhodopé and Pangaea, they seemed to bend their huge heads with grief at the song, and the river as it murmured by, sighed out the name Eurydice. At last, gathering up his courage, Orpheus determined he would make one bold effort to regain—if indeed he might regain—her.

But where was Eurydice? She had gone below this earth, to the world beneath the world, where the spirits of the dead were, in the dark kingdom over which Pluto and his wife Persephoné have their

dwelling. And there it was that Orpheus must seek her.

As he went down the dark cavern which led to the world of spirits, he touched his harp, and at once the souls of thousands, who lay there in darkness and in grief, came forth to meet him. There were children who had died without having looked on the sun—youths slain in battle—maidens who had been carried to an early grave—and the parents themselves, who had first wept, and then rejoined them. They all came clustering and rustling around him, but he still pressed on.

And now other wonders met his sight, and other wonders were raised by his singing. Cerberus, the dog with three heads, who guarded the inner entrance, ceased his eternal barking; the fiery wheel to which, for crimes done on earth, Ixíon was fastened, stopped for once in its turning; and the stone which Sisyphus was compelled ever to roll up hill, and to roll it up again as it ran down towards him, rested for a moment on the summit.

The heart of Orpheus rose within him as he saw the power of his magic harp. If it could do so much, could it not do one thing more? Through the alternate darkness and fiery light he still pressed onwards, till he stood before the throne of Pluto himself. And then, striking his harp again, it sent forth a tune of such beauty and such power, that the King of the

Dead, raising his dark eyes from the ground, gazed steadily on him. You have heard of the great musicians at school, and have sometimes tried to play some of their easier pieces. But nothing that they ever wrote, not for the pianoforte only, but for whole bands of players, could give any idea how beautiful was that imploring song of Orpheus ; not if the grandeur of Handel, and the grace of Mozart, with the tenderness of Weber, and the passion of Beethoven, were united in one overwhelming symphony. Soon, by the words of the song, he knew the desire of Orpheus. *He had this request to make, this request only. This was his heart's desire ; this was the world to him. Give him but this one, and he thought he would have all things.* Nothing could resist that song and that music. Pluto ordered Eurydice to be brought forth from the happy Elysian fields, where she was with the spirits of the blessed, that she might be restored to her husband. But one command was laid upon him. She would follow him as soon as he turned to ascend to the upper earth ; but he was not to look on her till they were without the furthest bounds of the kingdom of Pluto. If he did, such was the will of Pluto, she would be lost to him for ever.

And now Orpheus, still touching his harp, turned round, and as he moved onwards through the caverns of the dead, footsteps, whose sound he knew, were heard behind him. But Eurydice as yet spoke no

word. A fear came over his heart: it might not altogether be Eurydice, but some terrible white ghost that was following him. And he would have looked round, but that the command of Pluto rose before his mind, and he feared and obeyed.

But presently—he listened as he went—he knew it must indeed be *her* footsteps. It was his dear wife—his long-lost Eurydice—she whom he had so long known and loved! The journey was all but finished: already the light of day shone through the end of the cavern. It *was* finished, he thought. He could wait no longer; he loved her so much, he *must* see her. Alas for the love that was too strong for wisdom! He turned round. It was Eurydice. He took her hand, and fell upon her neck, warm and fair, and kissed her.

“Thine, and not thine!” she cried out with tears, forcing herself from his arms; “Thine, and not thine! Here I leave thee,—and for ever! What madness was it that has wasted all thy toil, and made thee turn to look on me? For ever!” And a sudden wind sweeping down the cavern bore her off from him, and hid his darling within the vast shadow of a darkness that no eye could pierce.

In vain he grasped the air; in vain he touched his harp; he had broken the commands of the King before he had left the bounds of his kingdom.

What should he now do? where should he turn

himself? No hope was left him. He might wander by the river-side, where he had first lost his Eurydice—whence he had gone forth again to seek her, and to lose her again. But the stream murmured to him that she was lost for ever. He might take up his harp; but where were the notes that might again make Death grant what Love sought, and win the ear of Pluto, and persuade him so that he should now once more, now really at last, restore his wife—that he should now

Quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice?

Long he sat and sorrowed after her, by the banks of Hebrus or of Strymon, or on the icy mountains of the North, pouring out by night a song that was sadder and sweeter than the nightingale's. But the chords of his harp were broken, and his hand lost its old cunning. There was but one note left, and that was *Eurydice*: Eurydice first and last, Eurydice only, only. . . . And then, as one day he sat down by the forest edge where he had last sung beside his lost Eurydice, the wild beasts whom his music had so often charmed, came forth to hear him. But their musician cared to charm them no longer. In the misery of his heart he cast himself on the ground a prey before them; and the roaring of the bear and the lion, as they made their feast over his limbs, was the last dirge of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Emily's tale left the children with moistened eyes. It was old and simple, and most of it, except the part about Beethoven, can be found in the Latin poet Virgil ; but they did not know that, and cried on as if it were new and true. To relieve them, while Anna took her place, a little song of Shakespeare's, which my readers will find in his play of "Henry VIII," was sung by Eleanor.

Orpheus with his lute made trees
And the mountain-tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing :
To his music, plants and flowers
Ever sprung, as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

Everything that heard him play,
E'en the billows of the sea
Hung their heads, and then lay by :
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.

ANNA'S SECOND TALE

FLORIZEL AND ROSELLA ; OR, THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD

FLORIZEL and Rosella lived in a castle of Bohemia, which is a famous country for castles, with their uncle the Count. Their parents were dead ; and they were placed under their uncle's care, who was to give

them the property which belonged to them so soon as they were grown up. The Count was a soldier, and a cruel man. He treated the children harshly, and every day he wished that he could get rid of them, and seize upon their money for himself. But he was afraid to do them any hurt, lest it should be found out, and the King his master should punish him.

At last he sent for his own servant, who had been with him to the wars, and told him to take the children, and carry them to an old woman, who lived many miles away on the other side of the Black Forest. And he was to give her a letter, in which the Count, without saying whose children they were, ordered her to take charge of them, and to bring them up in her cottage as her own.

The servant did as he was commanded. He took Florizel and Rosella, and a bag of gold, and carried them away by night to the old woman. They were only seven and five years old, and as they could not remember their own parents, and had been always unkindly treated by their uncle, they were glad to go. And after a little while they became very happy in their new home, for the old woman loved them as much as if they were her true children. And as they grew older, it was only as a kind of dream that they remembered their uncle and the castle in which they had been brought up during their infancy.

The Count told his friends that the children had died of the autumn-fever, and no one suspected what the truth really was. And presently, war broke out again, and the Count, with his servant, left home and marched with the King to battle.

The Count was a brave man, though he was so cruel; and he showed himself so good a soldier, that after a while the King made him General of all his armies. And when peace was settled, he took the Count to live with him in his court, at the capital city of Prague. There he was envied by all for his wealth and his honours, for no one guessed how wickedly he had acted, and he himself seemed as if he had entirely forgotten Florizel and Rosella, and all that he had done to them. So much may the mind's eye be blinded by wealth, and the ear of conscience be stopped by the sound of praise and flattery.

Florizel and Rosella lived, as I have said, very happily with old Lisa, who brought them up to be pious and industrious children. She taught Florizel to work in the garden, and Rosella to take care of the house, as she herself grew weaker with age; and in the evening they would sit by her, and cheer her with their pretty songs, for Rosella had a beautiful voice, and Florizel accompanied her singing on the flute, which he had been taught to use by the forester.

But after seven years had gone by, it pleased God

that old Lisa, who had been their second mother, should fall ill and die. The owner of the cottage, who was a wicked man, and loved nothing in the world but his money and himself, immediately sent his bailiff, who turned the children out of their home, and left them to shift for themselves as best they could.

So Florizel and Rosella, with nothing of their own except the clothes they wore, and Florizel's little flute, went out into the great Black Forest, and wandered up and down to seek a shelter, for it was autumn, and the nights were wet and chilly.

"We are like the real Children in the Wood, are we not?" said Florizel.

"Yes," said his sister, "but God will take care of us, as He sent His redbreast to care for those children."

"And we are older, too, than they," said Florizel.

So on they went, hand in hand, till they saw a long stream of light, shining between the trees. It was the forester's cottage. They tapped at the door, and when he saw who it was, he took them in, and treated them kindly. Next morning he begged them to stay with him, and said he would be their father, as they had no other friends.

But Florizel answered, "No," he would rather go out with his sister, and seek his fortune for himself, for he knew God would provide for them.

Then the children went out of the forest, and wandered from village to village. As they went, Rosella sang, and Florizel played on his flute. And when the villagers heard them sing their beautiful songs, they would always ask the children into their cottages, and give them a night's rest and food for the next day's journey. So they travelled on for many days, till at last they reached the capital city.

Early in the morning they went forth to the King's palace, and standing in front of the Queen's own apartment, they began their music. It was a most lovely German song which Rosella sang, and her brother accompanied: and it began with these words, *Einsam bin ich nicht alleine*. The Queen was so delighted that she ran to fetch the King, who came out with all his court to the balcony to listen. Every one was charmed, and the Count, who had not the least notion who they were, sent his servant, by the King's order, to give them each a golden bracelet, and to tell them to return and sing again to-morrow. So Florizel and Rosella went back and spent the rest of the day happily together, looking at their bracelets. There was a large oval carbuncle in the middle of Florizel's, but Rosella admired the two emeralds on hers much more. The only pity was that her wrists were so small and fine, the bracelet was almost too large for her.

That evening the King received a message that

the Count's servant desired leave to speak with him. The King did not quite like this: however, he went into the room, where he found that the servant had been suddenly taken ill, and was at the point of death. When every one had been sent away, he turned to the King, and said he begged him to hear a secret he had to tell, or else he could not die in peace. And then he told the King of all that the Count his master had done to Florizel and Rosella; how he had sent them to the old woman who lived on the edge of the Black Forest, and had taken their property for his own; and how that morning he had seen them—he was quite sure it was they—singing beneath the palace windows. And then, begging God to pardon the sin he had shared in, the servant turned his head away and died.

The King thought of what he had heard all night, and next day, when the children came before the palace, he sent for them and told them everything, and then directed them what to do, in order that their uncle's wickedness, which he had thought no ear would ever know of, might be made known to all the world, and he receive just punishment. Florizel was highly pleased with this, and said he had always believed he was born to be a gentleman, and began to give himself airs directly. Rosella too was pleased, only she told the King she hoped he would not punish her uncle. The King laughed at this, and so did the

Lord Chamberlain, who was standing by, only not so loud as the King, as was right and proper.

I now go on to tell how this was brought about. In the evening the King and Queen, and all their court, met together in a large hall of the palace, which was fitted up as a theatre. They sat down, the King and Queen in the front row, and the Count beside them.

Presently a curtain drew up, and the two children, dressed as they had been when they lived in their uncle's castle, were beheld wandering, hand-in-hand, through a scene which was painted to resemble a wild and gloomy forest. The name of the play was written up above. It was—

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD !

Then Florizel and Rosella, following the words of the old ballad, told how they had been driven from their home by their cruel uncle, who wished to murder them, and take their property for his own.

When he heard this, the Count turned pale, but he sat still, and said nothing.

The play went on ; the lamps were half-extinguished, and the children, as they went up and down in the darkness, were heard crying out, and praying for help, till their voices ceased, and there was utter silence.

This was terribly sad and natural, and extremely trying to the company, some of whom felt as if they must cry : and as the Queen knew nothing for certain (although you may be sure she had a shrewd guess at what her royal husband was about), she was ready to faint and scream ; and then the King could not help smiling at her, and she sat up again, and held her breath in the twilight.

Soon, however, the lamps were lighted again. Every one looked, and could now perceive the children, lying side by side as if they were dead, while the robin redbreasts, flying down, seemed to cover them with withered leaves, and meantime a voice behind the scene sang the following words :—

Rest, little ones, rest 'neath the leaves that we spread :
So tender—so pure : are ye sleeping, or dead ?
Almost the thin leaves seem to stir in your breath,
As though sleep had taken the likeness of death.

Rest, bright hair'd one, rest 'neath the leaves that we spread,
One little arm stretch'd 'neath thy sister's fair head :
One hand lock'd in hers, in assurance that she
Is e'en in her death undivided from thee.

Rest, tender and fair, 'neath the leaves that we spread ;
Lie like a fresh snow-wreath that Spring clouds have shed.
Thy gentle limbs numb'd in the chill rustling air,
Thy tender feet thorn-pierced, and trembling, and bare.

Rest, little ones, rest 'neath the leaves that we spread :
Rest, lips press'd on lips : are ye sleeping, or dead ?
Ye smile, as in dreaming our song ye could hear :—
Ye wept on your death-bed : ye smile on your bier.

It was a pretty sight, and looked so real and sorrowful, that all who were not in the secret burst into tears. But the King meanwhile fixed his eyes steadily on the Count, who blushed scarlet: his limbs shook under him; he rose up, and tried to make his way out of the hall.

"Ho! Forward!" cried the King; and at once the guard, stepping out behind, seized and held the Count prisoner; while Florizel and Rosella, as they had been before ordered, rising from the ground, came forward. Florizel looked firmly at his uncle, but Rosella cast her eyes downward.

"Do you know these children?" said the King.

But the Count could not answer a single word.

"Take him hence," continued the King, "and cast him into the innermost dungeon of the castle, where he shall never again see the light."

But the children, kneeling down, stretched out their hands to the King, and begged him earnestly to forgive their cruel uncle.

"Not so, my children," said he; "God, who has brought his sin to light, has commanded that even in this world the wicked should receive punishment. But should he in time repent truly of what he has done, he shall be set free, as you forgive him, whom he has so much injured. For it is a true story," concluded he, turning to the Queen, "and the real Children in the Wood are Florizel and Rosella."—

And I greatly suspect that the Queen knew as much already.

Anna's hearers looked puzzled ; " I thought the Children in the Wood lived in Norfolk," said one little voice. And they had not settled how this could be, when they were called upon to listen to the next speaker.

" What is your story to be like ? I hope it is not to be so sad," said Lucy.

" Never mind ; wait and you shall hear," said Eleanor.

" You might at least tell us its name !" cried Charles. " Let me see. Oh, what a girl you are to go in for our work, and give your story a long Greek name. You are as bad as Emily."

" It's a pretty name though," said she ; " and pray how do you pronounce it ?"

" The new Danaïdes — Da-na-i-dese," — replied Charles : " that's right, I know. Now go on."

ELEANOR'S SECOND TALE

THE NEW DANAIDES

"HUSBAND," said the Miller's wife one day to the Miller, as they sat talking together after breakfast, "What shall we do with our daughters?"

"That's your business," grumbled the Miller: "get them husbands, I suppose."

"I wish it were likely," said his wife; "but they are so foolish and obstinate, I hardly know how to manage them. They are just like the boulding-sieve up there in the mill: there is no good speaking to them; whatever one puts in at one ear, runs out at the other."

"You can't say that of my little Lisa, at least," replied the Miller. "Though it has pleased Heaven that the fever, two years since, should have taken away her hearing, yet she is by far the best and the quickest child of the four; and whatever she may learn she never forgets it."

"That's quite true," said his wife.

At this moment the door was quickly opened, and in ran the three eldest daughters, ready dressed and prepared as if for a journey.

"What now?" grumbled their father.

"We will not be children any longer," cried they in a breath ; "we have burnt our lesson-books, and we will go out and see the world for ourselves. What is the use of living in a mill all one's life ?"

"Foolish, wicked children !" cried their mother ; but they only laughed the more.

"We have made up our minds, and are going to Vienna, where our Aunt Catherine lives, to stay with her and find husbands," they continued. "We will go, and nothing shall stop us."

"O husband ! husband !" screamed their mother, in great alarm and perplexity.

"Let them go by all means, if they wish it," grumbled he. "A wilful man will have his own way, and a wilful girl is no better."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when off ran the daughters, to order the cart to be brought out, and the horses put in, to carry them to Vienna. And as they went they sang :—

The hart he loves the high wood :
The hare she loves the hill :
The knight he loves his bright sword :
But the lady loves her will.

"Foolish sieve-heads !" said their father. "Foolish sieve-heads ! Burn their books, indeed ! much they have learnt from them. But boult bran, say I, and have done with it."

"However, at least," he continued, looking grave, for he was more grieved at his daughters' folly than he could well express, "Lisa shall go with them. Deaf as she is, she will be the only one of the party with her ears open."

And so it was fixed. Their mother went for Lisa, and taking her slate, wrote down on it what had happened, and that she was to go with her sisters to Vienna, and keep them from harm as much as possible. And Lisa, who was a good, obedient girl, promised at once to obey, although in her heart she did not believe that her sisters were likely to get into mischief. I am sure, if I had any sisters, they would think the same about me.

Before long all was ready, and the four daughters started. As his parting present, their father gave them each one piece of advice,—

"Mouths closed and eyes open, is the rule for travellers."

Lisa said nothing, but the rest promised they would be quite sure to remember. Then, begging a blessing on their journey, the parents let them go, and returned to their home with a heavy heart.

The driver flourished his whip, the horses went merrily on; the bells on the harness jingled (you know all this happened in Germany), and the three elder sisters were in high spirits. Presently, forgetting their father's words, they began talking and screaming

at the top of their voices, so that you might have heard them for miles around.

“Poor Lisa!” they said, for they knew she could not hear them; “I suppose she is sent to take care of us; but we know who will want caring for.”

But Lisa sat still, and kept her eyes fixed on a book her father had given her as she went, which contained an account of a journey from Rome to Naples.

Looking up at last, she saw they were now many miles from home, and in the midst of a long valley with high mountains on each side. And she began to guess the reason of her father’s advice—“Mouths closed, and eyes open.” For, in fact, this valley was a famous place for robbers, who if they heard any travellers going by, were sure to rush out from their caves and hiding-places, and carry them off, to kill them, or to make them prisoners. And she could not help thinking that she saw the ends of guns, or a long stick or two at any rate, peering out among the bushes where the road narrowed a little further on.

Lisa called out to her sisters, and telling them what she thought, she begged them to remember their father’s advice, and to be silent (for she could not help seeing, by the movement of their lips, that they were talking loudly) at least for the present.

“Our father’s advice!” they cried to each other, “I never remember hearing it;” and they laughed more loudly than ever.

But all at once a shout, louder than their laughter, was heard about them; and the rocks and bushes, that had looked so dead and quiet, seemed now alive with armed men. The robbers were upon them. In vain the driver tried to push his horses on: the traces were cut; the travellers taken out, made prisoners, and carried off to the robbers' cave among the mountains.

Very disagreeable work it was for the girls to climb the hillside in this way. I can't say how much their neat shoes and white stockings were the worse for it; and one of them lost her best shawl-pin before they reached the cave. There they found the rest of the band, together with one prisoner, whom they had taken the day before—a young man who was going to study medicine at the University of Jena, and who was stupid enough not to look pleased when so many young ladies were added to the party. But then all this happened in Germany.

The robbers seated themselves and their prisoners by a fire that was burning at the cave's mouth. Seeing presently what imprudent and talkative persons the three daughters were, and wishing to make the most of their good luck, they treated them civilly; but they sent Lisa to the farthest end of the cave to feed on bread and water, with no companion except the unfortunate Student.

The Student asked Lisa in a whisper who she was,

and how she had fallen into the robbers' hands. And at first it puzzled him greatly to find that she gave him no answer. He had never been treated so by any young lady before, except once by the daughter of the Head of his College, when he asked her whether she did not like Mendelssohn better than Strauss. But Lisa picked up a bit of flat stone from the ground, and scratching on it a few words, gave it to him.

Now this Student was really a clever and ready man : so without saying a word he hunted about the cave, and presently found a small piece of wood. This he scooped out with a knife, until he had cut it to the shape of a sea-shell, or little trumpet, such as deaf persons use, for he had often seen such in hospitals. He placed this in Lisa's ear ; and now to her surprise and joy she again heard the sounds of a human voice, as he whispered to her " Not to fear, for he was a friend." She was ready to throw herself on her knees and thank God for the cure, which, as it seemed, had been so wonderfully wrought in her ; but her sisters' voices, talking and laughing loud as ever, struck on her ear, and she turned with surprise and alarm to listen to what was going on : for the little trumpet was so cleverly made, that she really could hear almost distinctly now.

The robbers amongst whom they had fallen were a bold, handsome set of men : not ignorant of the ways

of rendering themselves agreeable when they thought they could gain anything by it. And several of them by their flatteries and tales of adventure had already made themselves so pleasant to the three foolish sisters, that they appeared to be the best friends in the world, and their imprudent talk gave Lisa the greatest alarm. "Mouths closed and eyes open," she thought to herself; but already her sisters were giving the robbers full information as to where their father lived,—about his mill, and his money. "We shall each of us have a good fortune," said the oldest. "Our father keeps his money always ready by him," said the next. "We know all about it," said the third. The robbers winked to each other as they heard this, and it was quite clear to Lisa and the Student, that the next thing would be, that they would attack and rob the Miller.

"Your sisters do not seem to have much prudence," said he, in a low voice; "they are like those ancient Greek maidens—the Danaïdes I think they were called,—whom I have read of, who were condemned, as the poets say, for their folly on earth, to pour water eternally into a sieve."

"I never heard of them," said Lisa: "but do not find fault with my sisters: I am afraid it is too true. But I must go," she added, seeing the robbers now consulting earnestly together, "and hear, if I can, what their plans may be."

Hiding the little trumpet in her hand, Lisa went forward to her sisters, and took her seat by them at the fire : when after a while they fell asleep. Thinking Lisa deaf, the robbers talked openly on ; and quickly lifting the little tube to her ear, she presently heard them say, that they would set out that very night for her father's mill, and plunder it.

Lisa crept back and told what she had heard to the Student. But how should they prevent it ? They were only two, and one of them a girl, and the robbers were half-a-dozen, all handsome young men. Whatever plan they could think of, was full of danger : and yet the night was passing away, and something must be done. So the Student, who was very brave and resolute, quietly rose up and moved towards the robbers. Pretending to think them asleep, he ran quickly towards the mouth of the cave, as if about to escape from it. With a loud shout the robbers rose up and endeavoured to seize him. In the confusion the lights were knocked over, and Lisa, as had been settled, rushing hastily by, passed through the door, and soon found herself safe from pursuit in the valley. " She is only the deaf one," said the robbers, " and can do us no harm—we will let her go."

But as no time was to be lost, they tied the Student, with many blows, hand and foot, and carried him to the end of the cave,—threatening that if he stirred they would instantly kill him. Then, leaving the

three sisters still fast asleep by the fire, they marched out in a band down the valley.

But Lisa had been before them. Running on with all the speed she could, within two hours she reached the mill, and had just time to awaken her father and the servants, and tell them what was about to happen, when a loud whistle was heard in the darkness without, and in a moment the robbers were upon them.

But it was too late : all within were prepared. A shot from the Miller laid the foremost robber on the ground ; his men rushed out, and knowing well every spot about the mill, managed to surround the band. And after a few minutes' fight, seeing their plan had been discovered, the robbers gave in, and were bound hand and foot in their turn.

But as soon as it was day, the Miller, with Lisa to guide him, set off for the cavern. On the way she told him of all that had happened, and how skilfully the Student had given back to her her long-lost sense of hearing. They found the three sisters just awaking from sleep. "Vienna is a nice place," said the eldest, not remembering where she really was. "I have got a handsome husband," said the second. "I knew it would happen : so I know all about it," yawned out the third. "Lisa may take the foolish Student and marry him if she pleases."

"So it shall be !" said their father, who to their immense surprize now suddenly stepped in among

them. "So it shall be!" Going up to the Student, he cut asunder the ropes that bound him. "He deserves her well; for not only has he restored her to hearing, but us to life."

The Student came forward, and Lisa gave him her hand.

"But we will go on to Vienna," said the daughters, who wished to make the best of everything, and were not at all ashamed of their conduct.

"You may go with all my heart," grumbled out the Miller, "for there is no power in the world that can keep wisdom in the heads of the foolish and the obstinate. I can choose, and grind, and boul't corn," he concluded, turning to the Student, "but you will allow, that I cannot turn a sieve into a bucket."

Eleanor now took her place by the pianoforte. It was Arthur's turn, and he began without hesitation.

ARTHUR'S SECOND TALE

THE DISAPPOINTED PRINCE

THE Duke of Franconia had an only daughter, named Bertha. Like the Princess Fiammetta, of whom I told you in my first story, Bertha's father was very fond of her, and had brought her up in all

the knowledge which young ladies commonly learned several centuries ago. She could embroider in silk, and precious gems, and gold, till her work stood upright with its own stiffness: she rode out to hunting-parties in the forest with a falcon on her wrist: and on other days she would read a romance, or novel, from an illuminated manuscript,—for printed books were not then thought of,—in fourteen volumes, and divided into not less than forty-four separate books or cantos.—(Just think! What good old days those were, when novels were in fourteen volumes!) But like Fiammetta, Bertha attended more to what she heard from the old Nurse who had brought her up from her infancy than to any of her teachers. The Duke's castle stood in the midst of the great Hartz mountains, which from time unknown, as those who lived there said, had been haunted by fairies and spirits without number. Every one had seen the elves dance, by night, in their curious circles: the Wild Huntsman made the woods echo to hound and horn: and a spirit, who went by the name of the Dame Blanche, or White Lady, was wont to give warning by loud shrieks whenever any evil was about to fall on the owners of the castle. Bertha, who had been brought up to hear such tales from her cradle, believed them without hesitation.

As she was her father's only heiress, she was soon sought in marriage by the neighbouring lords and

princes. But there was none who so much pleased the Duke, her father, as Prince Ferdinand of Bavaria. Whenever any feast might be held at the castle, he was sure to be present, and to do himself credit by his skill and bravery in all the manly exercises of that day. None could equal him in that famous game wherein two horsemen, riding furiously at each other, endeavoured each to unseat his enemy: none were more skilled in the use of the bow or the broadsword. And besides all this, he was an admirable musician, and could have charmed the savageness out of a bear, if it had been desirable to do so, as he touched the lute or cithern. It was not strange that so many gifts and graces should have won for him the favour, and even something like the love, of Bertha. And as she now had reached her eighteenth year, it was her father's wish to fix the day of her marriage with as little delay as possible. But although every one else in the castle was the Prince's friend, for some reason or other Bertha's nurse bore him great ill-will and hatred. People said he had called her a witch: and no doubt she looked like one. Every day she tried her utmost to bring over her young mistress to her own mind; and to persuade her to break off the intended marriage. Bertha, however, was by no means inclined to agree. "What a fine thing," she would say, "it will be for me to have a castle, all for my real own, to live in—with

my soldiers and servants, and my own woods to hunt in!" And then, in hopes to please Nurse, she would add, "And you too shall come with me, dear Nurse, and shall have a set of rooms for yourself, and a little serving-maid to wait on you, and every day I will come and sit with you, and you shall tell me wonderful stories, as you did when I was a child, *such* a long while ago." But nothing could satisfy the old woman, who every day hated Prince Ferdinand more and more, and declared she was sure some harm would come of the marriage. One morning she rushed in hastily to Bertha, and screamed out that she had heard the White Lady moaning and crying round the castle, as she had done at the death of Bertha's mother.

"The White Lady means that we should marry as soon as possible," said Bertha laughing, but still feeling rather alarmed. "Indeed, I am sure," she continued, "it was not the White Lady at all, but the magic music of the Good Angels: which you know shows that they bless whatever we are about. I heard it last night myself, when I was sleeping."

But for all this Nurse was not to be convinced. And at last, in hopes to satisfy her, Bertha promised that if she did not hear the Angels' music that very night she would beg her father to send away Prince Ferdinand, and break off the marriage altogether.

Now it so happened that a little Page of Bertha's

was in the room whilst this was going on. And as he loved Prince Ferdinand, who had promised to give him a horse and hunting-horn, *one day*—he ran down directly to the great hall, where he knew Prince Ferdinand was, and told him of all he had heard. Ferdinand laughed: and as he was clever as well as brave, he immediately bethought him of a plan by which he could make sure of his marriage: for he dearly loved Bertha, and was willing to do anything (that was not wrong) for her sake. And he directly set about his plan. Getting a long box, made of thin slips of deal, he stretched a few strings loosely across the top, and thus made what some of you may have seen or heard of as an Aeolian harp. And when evening fell, he hastened to place it in a nook below Bertha's window: for he knew that when the wind blew over it the strings would sound of themselves, and convince even Nurse herself that she had heard the magic music of the Good Angels.

Everything fell out as he had planned it. Between fear and pleasure, Bertha could hardly trust her own self as she heard the wild notes of the harp sounding through the night. As the chords faintly quivered beneath the first soft handling of the evening gale, the music must be, she thought, afar off in the gray distance. But as the wind strengthened, it seemed to roll up the valley to the castle, to come close beside

her window, and then go right up to heaven and die away among the stars.

She thought that it was fancy, and she listen'd in her bed :
And then did something speak to her—she knew not what was said ;
For great delight and shuddering took hold of all her mind,
And up the valley came again the music on the wind.

When the morning came, no further objections could be made. Bertha welcomed Ferdinand as she had never welcomed him before: all delays were at an end, and the marriage was fixed to take place as soon as seven days were over.

The Nurse now began to fear that, do what she might, nothing could hinder Bertha's marriage with Ferdinand. But the more likely it seemed, the more her spite and anger increased, and she determined to leave, as they say, no stone unturned if she could anyhow prevent it. But the time was quickly going by. Three days had passed, and nothing was to be seen or heard but preparations for what was about to happen. All the handmaidens of the castle were at work shaping, and cutting, and embroidering the dresses for the bride. There was one evening dress, all trimmed with pearls and emeralds, one emerald to every five pearls, which was pronounced by all the world the most sweetly pretty thing ever seen in Franconia; and I daresay it was. It took, however, a great deal of work in fixing the pearls and

emeralds, and so the maids begged the Nurse to lend her help in the work. But she crossly refused, and sallied forth from the castle to avoid their entreaties. As she paced round the walls, looking up angrily at them, something caught her eye fixed in one of the window-sills immediately below Bertha's room. It was the very Aeolian harp, which, in the joy of his heart, Ferdinand had carelessly left there after the night when it had done him such good service ! The old woman's eye flashed with wicked pleasure. She took the little box down, and looking at it carefully, in a moment she understood the secret of the magic music. But she carried it off, and without saying a word, hid it in her own room for the present.

Ferdinand never suspected what had happened. He often spoke of the music, which he said had done more to win him his bride than his love or his bravery. And so the days passed. On the last evening, a dreadful storm arose in the valley. The rain fell, and the winds as they rose howled through the old forest, and sent their wild shrieks like swords through the castle casements. And the servants afterwards, one and all, declared that on that night they had heard the White Lady forbidding in clear words the approaching marriage of the young heiress.

But next morning the sun rose clear and the skies were cloudless. Midday came, and every one met together in the chapel for the wedding. The bells of

the village that lay below the castle sounded merrily : the chapel was filled with a crowd of knights in full armour, the friends and relations of Bertha and Ferdinand. The Priest stood in full robes before the altar, ready to say the words of blessing, and the Duke was talking with the prince's father, the King of Bavaria. Ferdinand lookd alternately at his bride,—who stood beside him, her face and head covered with the veil, below which her hair fell in long golden streams,—and at himself, his own armour and knightly dress, in fear lest he should not seem worthy to come into possession of so much beauty. But on the whole he was not much alarmed at the sight ; and if he was not satisfied, all I can say is, that he must have been very hard to please.

But at this moment a rustling and clanking was heard in the crowd, as they parted to make way for the aged Nurse, who forced a path to the altar. At the feet of Bertha she laid a small box. Ferdinand turned pale at the sight : whilst the Duke and the King of Bavaria looked angrily on at the interruption.

“ I have brought my gift to the bride, as is fitting,” she said. “ Take it ; and then—if you dare—give yourself to Prince Ferdinand ! It was not the magic music of the Good Angels that you heard,” she continued—breathing on the strings, till once more Bertha started at those sweet unearthly notes—“ it was no magic music. But I take all to witness,” she said,

turning and looking to the crowd, who shuddered with fear, so deeply was the belief fixed in each mind—"that last night there was a warning in the air—and not only I heard it—but all—all! I bid you beware of the White Lady!"

Bertha turned pale—sank back in her father's arms in a terror which she could not conquer. It was in vain that the King ordered the Priest to proceed: it was in vain that her father endeavoured to give her comfort: it was in vain that Ferdinand begged her to think his love and his strong arm a sufficient defence against an old wife's fable. Idle as it was, the belief of years was not to be overcome by the persuasion of a moment: she could neither listen to command, to counsel, or to affection: and the disappointed Prince returned home to endeavour to forget the loss of a bride whose mind could not outgrow the feelings of her childhood.

The melancholy end of Arthur's tale did not seem to give satisfaction. Every one felt disappointed, along with the hero of the story: Arthur said "Why! the story, really ended so! I cannot help it!" But this, it was felt by every one, would not do; and silence was only broken by the voice of the fifth of the young novelists.

CHARLES' SECOND TALE

THE UNCAGED LION

THE Prince had ridden out early to a hunting party, leaving his newly-wedded wife to find amusement to fill up the hours till evening. As the sound of the bugle-horns made it known that the party, collected in the castle courtyard, had sallied forth, she mounted to the topmost tower, and directing her eyes to a waste stony flat over which the hunting train was to pass, she watched the Prince as he rode gaily onwards. And ever and anon she would wave her handkerchief to him, as she thought he stopped for a moment and looked back to her. But this may have been only a fancy on her part.

She was presently joined by her uncle, the Count Frederic. After a glance at the now rapidly disappearing party, he turned his fair niece's attention to the ruins of the Stammburg, or ancient castle of the family, which, after the fashion of those warlike days, occupied the summit of a lofty rock at half a mile's distance.

"Do but look," said he, cheerfully, "at the main tower, which rises from the loftiest of the rocks, and is so firmly connected and incorporated with it by

solid masonry, that no eye can distinguish where nature leaves off and art and labour have begun their handiwork. Observe how the mighty pile, warred on and warring, has for ages boldly met the violence of the seasons :—how here and there its walls have had to yield, and rush down into wild ruins. See too how thickly the trees, sowing themselves by all winds in every nook and cranny of rock and stone-work, have encompassed the base of the tower with a living forest, and have even crowned the summit with a gay and waving circlet !”

“ Since I took up my abode here,” said the Princess, “ it has been my wish to examine more closely that old ruin, and above all, to penetrate into the interior of the main tower.”

“ Your wish may be easily gratified, my fair cousin,” answered the Count. “ I myself long felt the liveliest curiosity to explore the building, and at last, by the aid of wood and stone cutters, a way has been hewn, through trees and vaults, into the interior. You can also mount to the summit by a winding stair in the turret, and from it look down on the level surface of the circular courtyard below, and examine the doors and the windows which open upon the great hall, the chapel, and the dwelling rooms, which, though empty and deserted, have not suffered otherwise from time. Altogether, it reminded me of the famous Colosseum or Amphitheatre of Rome, into which the

wild animals were brought from dens and vaults below, whilst the spectators sat to view them fight from the surrounding galleries."

The Page entered, with notice that the horses were brought out.. The Princess, turning to her uncle, proposed that they should ride up, and view with their own eyes the sight they had been speaking of. "Not yet," said he: "Let us wait the return of the Prince for such an expedition."

"Then let us ride at least upwards, were it only to the foot: I have the greatest wish to-day to look about me far into the world."

"As you will," replied the Count.

"Let us ride through the town, however," continued the lady, "through the great market-place, where they are now holding the summer fair. It gives me the greatest pleasure to thread my way slowly through the innumerable crowd of booths, and to see all the trades and occupations, which are usually carried on within-doors, exposed now, as it were, to broad daylight."

The Princess hastened to mount her favourite horse, and the Count was presently at her side. As was to be expected, they could only advance through the market step by step: the crowd so pressed about the riders. By degrees, however, they reached a clear space, which led out to the suburbs; there, at the end of many small booths and stands, a larger building of

boards showed itself. Loud bellowings proceeded from the interior. The feeding-hour of the beasts exhibited there had come : the lion was very hungry, and let his wild voice be heard to the best of his power. The horses shuddered, and could hardly be held in ; they had never seen a lion, it is true, but they all knew quite well what that dreadful roar meant. As our friends passed the booth, they were struck by the great pictures stretched without it. The grim, tawny tiger was drawn pouncing on a negro, and on the point of tearing him to little pieces ; a lion stood by, calmly, as if he saw no prey worthy of him ; and other wonderful parti-coloured creatures were scattered around.

“As we come back,” said the Princess, “we will take a nearer view of these gentry.”

And so they rode onwards, till the old castle they were seeking rose full in their view. Over a stony flat the mighty ruin stood fronting them. Great rocks, jutting out, seemed firmly clenched and bound together below ; above these rested the massy stones of the foundation : and so the whole mass towered upwards, frowning down on them as if to forbid any attempt to scale it. But the steep and the difficult is only an invitation to youth. The Princess expressed her wish to try : the Count was ready to show that his strength was undiminished : and the climbers soon reached a certain point, where a huge projecting

point afforded standing-room ; and a vast prospect, as they turned round to gaze, unfolded itself beneath them.

Everything came out clear in the great sunlight. The Prince's castle lay full in view : they could look with ease into the town, and by the aid of a glass distinguish the booths in the market-place. But no sound reached them.

"I have often noticed this stillness at noon," said the Princess. "It seems as if now, just as at midnight, the whole world was sleeping."

Suddenly, the Count, who was looking steadily through the glass, started up, exclaiming, "Fire ! Fire ! Look ! there is fire in the market-place !"

It was so. Puffs of smoke at first rose, though the flames were smothered in the daylight. But presently it spread : the smoke mounted aloft, and from time to time a red burst of light could be seen. The Princess and her uncle looked at each other, and without a word, rapidly descending from the rock, they mounted their horses, and proceeded at as quick a pace as they could master, across the stony flat towards the scene of mischief.

As they went, every moment the glow increased. The booths, lightly built, could give no resistance to the flame. The planks cracked, the laths crackled ; the canvas flew abroad, and its dusky tatters whirled themselves round and aloft, as if mischievous fairies

suddenly let loose were capriciously dancing in the air. No living creature, however, met their eyes: the inhabitants were all busily employed in endeavouring to save their property.

But now, in a thicket on the right-hand of the road, the Princess suddenly perceived something strange—which she presently recognized to be the lion, standing as he had been painted. Springing up, he leisurely bounded towards them.

“Fly! Fly!” cried the Count.

She turned her horse towards the steep hill they had descended. Frederic, rushing on towards the monster, drew his pistol, and fired when he thought himself near enough, but without effect. The lion sprang aside, the horse faltered, and the wild beast followed his course straight after the Princess. She galloped up the steep stony space: the lion was approaching, though not with vehement speed: only the Count riding after him appeared to excite and urge him on anew. Seeing this, the Princess turned her horse quickly to one side: he stumbled on the loose gravel, and fell. She gave herself up for lost: but at that instant Frederic fired his remaining pistol. Though aimed with no better effect than the first, it was so far successful that it urged the lion, as much terrified as terrifying, to pursue his flight rapidly up the steep towards the castle, without turning aside to injure the Princess.

Thus she was saved. Before her uncle reached the spot, she had cleverly regained her feet; and both now proposed to ride at once to the Prince's castle, and seek for aid from the huntsmen to prevent further mischief; for as the lion was still free and uninjured, no one could guess what he might not try next.

As they went, they looked towards the town. The rage of the fire, which had fortunately not extended to the houses around the market-place, had spent itself: but only a few blackened poles, with smouldering heaps of timber-work below, remained to point out where the fair had been. But their eyes were presently turned to a strange pair apparently advancing to meet them. Up the road came a woman, with a boy who held a small flute in his hand. From their dress, which was cleanly and decent, yet strange and of many colours, the Princess at once conjectured that they must be the owners of the menagerie or show whence the lion had made his escape.

"Where is he? Where is he?" the woman cried with passionate grief. Then, without awaiting an answer, she knelt down and pressed the palms of her hands together. "They have murdered thee, poor beast!—murdered thee without need. Thou wert tame, and wouldst have lain down at rest and waited our coming. Thou wert the most beautiful of all thy kind: how long have we gone with thee on thy journeys: how long hast thou been faithful and

useful to us ! To us, of very truth, meat came from the eater, and sweetness came from the strong. So will it be no more. Woe ! Woe ! ”

The Princess, struck with surprize at the strangeness of the woman’s speech, was unable to answer her, when, over the road they had left, riders came rushing down. It was the hunting-train, led on by the Prince, who, while following their sport, had perceived the sudden columns of distant smoke, and were hastening towards the fire. And they now stood in wonder at the Princess and those about her, when a man pressed forward into the circle : large of stature, and strangely dressed.

“ This is no time for lamenting,” he said ; “ the lion is loose, my lord : he has gone towards the mountains : but spare him, have mercy on him ! ”

“ The lion ! ” said the Prince. “ We will spare him if we can ; but he cannot at least be left free. Why were you so thoughtless as to let him loose ? ”

“ The fire broke out,” replied he : “ we kept quiet and attentive ; but a heap of powder blew up, and the brands fell on the booth, so we had to escape for our lives.”

One of the huntsmen now came hastily down from the castle rock, and made it known that the lion had found his way within the great tower by means of the lower vaults, and had lain himself down to sleep in the empty courtyard space.

"What surety can you give," said the Prince, turning to the man, "that, if we spare your lion, he will not work injury amongst us?"

"This woman and child," answered the father, "engage to tame him—to keep him at peace, till I bring up the cage; and then we can carry him back unharmed and without harming any one."

The boy put the flute to his lips: sweet, low tones breathed from it.

"Secure the vaulted entrance," said the Prince to Frederic; "you, who caused it to be made, know it best: keep your rifles ready, but do not shoot unless the creature can be driven back no otherwise. The man and woman will take charge of the rest."

The child continued his tune—which was no tune: rather, a series of notes without law; and perhaps on that account the more touching. Meanwhile the father—with a firm, noble voice and bearing—began to speak in this manner:—

"God has given to the beasts of the field wisdom, each after his kind: and He has set them on the earth, their habitation. Consider the ant: she knows her way, and loses it not; she builds her dwelling of the dust, and through the winter she abides therein. Consider the horse: he is carried by the wind over the desert; he snorts, and cannot rest; yet is he bridled by man, and obeys his command. But

in the forest of palms arose the lion: he marches through the wilderness; there he rules over all creatures; and his might who can withstand? Yet man can tame him: he reverences him who was made in the image of the Highest: he bows himself down: he is afraid before Daniel, even in the midst of the den of Babylon."

This speech the child accompanied here and there with graceful tones; but now the Count, by a shout from above, gave signal that all was prepared. The man hastened downwards to the town. The Prince led the way upward, and conducting his wife and the hunting-party to the winding stair, presently appeared on the summit. The mother led her child to the entrance of the vault, where Frederic was keeping watch, and bade him proceed without fearing within it. "Fear not," she said to the Count, "the aid of violence will not be necessary; others will do the work."

Meanwhile, to the party stationed above, the pause was almost frightful. At last the flute was heard; the child stepped forth from the cavern with bright eyes. He sounded his flute; the mighty beast, who was lying in quiet in one corner of the courtyard, raised himself at the notes; the boy led him in a half circle to the entrance of the vaults, and at length, on a spot where the last rays of the sun poured in through a ruined window-casement, he sat down, glowing and beautiful in the ruddy light.

The lion laid itself down close to the child, and lifted its heavy right fore-paw into his bosom ; the boy as he sung stroked it, and was not long in observing that a sharp thorn had fixed itself in the foot. He carefully pulled it out, and with a smile, taking the silk handkerchief from his neck, bound up the paw of the monster. The Princess for joy bent over the depth below with outstretched arms, and would perhaps have shouted and clapped applause, had not her husband's arm, laid firmly upon her's, reminded her that the danger was not yet over.

Triumphantly the child sang on ; and were it possible to fancy that the countenance of so grim a creature, the tyrant of the forest, could mould itself to the expression of friendliness and thankful contentment, such a look was now traceable on it. And truly the child, as he stood and sang in the sunbeam, had the air as of a mighty triumphant conqueror. But the lion, stretched quietly there, looked not indeed as if conquered,—for his strength lay concealed in him : but rather like one tamed and given up to his own peaceful will, to the all-subduing charm of song and the irresistible might of gentleness.

Charles' tale had a sobering effect ; there was no doubt of its being the best they had yet heard. He

said, he only wished it were his own, but it was due to the great German poet, Goethe; and he trusted, that if that great man could know of it (which he could not, however, as he was dead—at which the children looked sorry), he would not disapprove of the use to which it had been put. Without any hint given, Anna and Arthur repeated their duet; and the little company went their ways for the present subdued and quieted.



END OF THE SECOND DAY

THIRD DAY

Many a dish and many a guest :
Each may take what likes him best.

THE rain still continued, and the stories with it.

"No music to-day!" cried the children, as they entered the drawing-room, and saw that the piano-forte had its great leathern coat on, and looked, as they said, "so snug and comfortable."

"Not to-day," said Lucy Wentworth; "and, for my part, I am not very sorry for it; for I do not care for music; and mamma says I am like a little post, with no ears. But there is something better coming—something *so* nice. I know what. I heard mamma order it," she added, looking mysterious.

"What is it?—what is it?" cried out the younger ones.

"You will soon see," said Mrs. Wentworth, smiling; "meanwhile, listen to what Charles has to tell you, and be sure you do not forget it."



CHARLES' THIRD TALE

THE GREEDY BEAR

THERE was a certain Brown Bear, who lived in a forest. All his brothers and sisters were very respectable bears, who kept their coats clean and bright, tore their food in pieces cleverly with their claws without putting their mouths into it, and were so moderate in their appetites that they would sleep all the winter long, rolled up in the snow, at the foot of a tree, without so much as dreaming of dinner. But this Brown Bear had always been unlike the rest. Even when he was quite young and pretty, he would quarrel with his brothers and sisters over their breakfast in the nursery ; he always wanted the pieces with the great lumps of fat on them, this funny Brown Bear ; and if they did not give him what he fancied, he would hug them in his paws till they screamed, or he would cry and scream himself till they gave him what he wished for, and begged him not to make himself so disagreeable. Do not do like the little Brown Bear, my darlings, and get nice things by making yourselves nasty.

When he grew older, his greediness increased. He

would climb up a hollow tree, where he had seen the bees flying in and out, and would pull down the hive about his ears, shutting his eyes and mouth, so that the bees could not sting him—because, you know, he had his bearskin coat on; and then he would sit down on his hind-legs and tail and eat the honeycomb at his leisure, without giving a crumb of it to anybody else. He would make friends with the wild dogs and wolves in the forest, and call himself their cousin, because he was shaggy and they were shaggy too. And when they had brought him the game they had managed to catch, instead of thanking them he would first eat it up, and then the dogs and wolves after it. He would lie down and pretend to be asleep; and when the wood-pigeons, and merles, and other birds came and settled about him, he would cleverly stretch out a paw, and catch one before it could fly away; for nothing was too little or too great for his mouth. Indeed, it was said he would often look up at the moon, which he took for a great honeycomb, because it was so yellow (as everybody sees what they wish for in things that are at a distance from them), and stamp and howl for it. And once he climbed up to the top of a very tall tree to try to catch the moon when it was full; but he found it just too far off for him to get at.

There was another thing also which my Bear had never eaten, although he knew that it was thought

a special delicacy by the wicked white bears who live near the North Pole. For the wood he lived in was so wild, that no merchant, or even wandering traveller, ever passed that way. If he had, the greedy Brown Bear would not have lost the opportunity of tasting him.

At last, one day, a Fairy who lived in the forest, and saw how all the wild creatures were going on, became very angry with our friend the Brown Bear, and determined to punish him for his greediness, though not without giving him a chance to repent of it ; because even Brown Bears should have the chance of growing better. So, turning himself into the shape of a travelling negro, he wandered along as if he had lost his way, till he came to the bear's cavern. Out ran the Bear with a loud howl, and setting upon the traveller, soon pulled him to the ground. The man begged hard for his life, and told the Bear what a cruel and savage thing it was for him to destroy and eat a poor man, such as he was, travelling through the wood without hurting any one ; adding, that nature had provided plenty of lesser animals, not to speak of fruits and honey, for him to feed on. But the Bear made him a good set speech.

“No creature can be called cruel but that which by malice extinguishes his natural pity. I was born without compassion for Man : and follow the law of my nature. I am the strongest, and shall eat you.

The Eternal Veracities"—(I daresay he meant Voracities, but you see what happens when bears or men use long words without meaning much by them)—“the Eternal Veracities are on my side! It is only Man who changes. Man at first was taught to feed on nothing but vegetables. But your violent love of change, and novelty, have led you to destroy animals without right or necessity. What creature have you spared to satisfy your foolish and misdirected appetite? I am told you eat even the pretty little lambs who frisk in the meadows, and have mint-sauce with them. As for my appetite, I have tried to change it, but in vain! Often have I filled myself with roots and herbs, but to no purpose: nothing but large quantities of flesh can in any way satisfy me. You are black brother Quashee, of whom I have heard a great deal, and think very little: I am stronger than you, and can growl louder and longer: *humph.*”

“Don't take so much trouble about it,” said the traveller, and fainted straight away with fear: and the Bear immediately made his dinner on him with the greatest satisfaction.

But no sooner had Dr. Growler finished his meal, when by the power of the Fairy, who had fled from the body of the negro and returned to his proper shape, a wonderful change took place in him. He suddenly found himself turned into the form and figure of a

Man : nay more, in place of a Bear, strange to say, he was now a King, living in a sumptuous palace, and surrounded by crowds of guards and courtiers. His former life already appeared to him but a dream of the night before : what he now was, it seemed as if he had always been. He ordered a splendid feast to be brought up ; the dishes were of solid gold, and the



great Lords of his kingdom, kneeling each on one knee, offered them to him, as neatly and gracefully as if they had been man-servants all their lives.

The Bear-king had never tasted anything so delicious before: and he thought that all the fish, flesh, and fowl in creation must be spread before him, so numerous were the dishes. But next day a new feast was spread: and so it went on day by day, and day by day his old greedy nature increased and gathered strength. "What a splendid King we have," said his subjects: "he feasts twice every day, and there is no good thing which is not brought before him." And some of them called him King Doublemeal in consequence. But most thought the better of him for it, and called him a Hero, and were silly enough almost to worship him; for vulgar people cannot see a strong mind, but they can see strong muscles, and always think the most of them.

But, like the rich man in the parable, the King's pride and selfishness grew with his wealth and his opportunities of using it. He would have driven Lazarus from his table: and though the poor of his kingdom were starving, he would not spare a crumb to relieve their misery.

Now, when the Fairy, who had transformed the Brown Bear into a Man, saw this, he determined he would punish him for his wickedness. But he thought that he would first give the King a chance for repentance. So he sought out the most beautiful Princess in the country. "Would you be Queen of all the land?" he said to her. "Yes," said she. "You must then

allow yourself for a while to be changed into a She-bear," replied the Fairy: "I promise that no harm shall happen to you: only, ask no questions." The Princess thought this last thing very hard, but, strange to say, she agreed, and accordingly the Fairy, who had now given himself the appearance of an old man, led her with him to the King's Court.

The King was holding a great feast at the moment. He called for music; and his Page, coming up, told him that outside the palace-gate was an old man with a flute, leading a She-bear, who danced to his music, which was the most wonderful that had ever been heard. The King ordered them to be brought in: the Fairy breathed on his flute; and she followed the changes and movements of the tune so skilfully that Anna would have thought the Bear had learnt dancing of her own mistress.

("Don't be impertinent," said Anna; "Mademoiselle Entrechat you know would never *condescend* to give lessons to a bear.")

"Nor to a boy neither, if she could help it, I am sure," said Charles; and then proceeded:)

The King and his courtiers were much delighted: but when the old musician, leading forward the Bear (at which the King was aware that a sort of *hairy* feeling crept all over him), knelt down and begged him for some food, saying that he and his companion had tasted nothing for several days,—the King, rising

up from his throne, in a rage, ordered the guards to drive them out of the palace. "Shall I spend my goods on these beggars!" said he: but the King's Page, who was shocked at his master's cruelty, ran to the old man, and privately put some food into his hand. The musician thanked him: and what was his surprise when, instead of the Bear, the most beautiful Maiden he had ever seen reached out her hand, and, in the softest tones, said that she would remember his kindness. How very nice for that young Page!

The King, who saw this, was struck with grief and fear for his own conduct: and rushing forward, he tried to reach and to speak to the beautiful Maiden. But she and the Fairy, quickly passing through the crowd, as if on wings, made their way out and disappeared.

All night the King lay awake, thinking of the lovely Princess, and wondering how he could find her again and make her his Queen. And as he was thinking thus, and growing sorry for what he had done, the door gently opened, and the Maiden, gliding in without a sound, came up to his bedside. "Fairest one!" he said—"wilt thou be my Bride?" "Not yet," she answered: laying down, as she spoke, three golden apples on the table beside him. "If the King can fast from food for three days, and refrain himself from touching the apples, I will be his Queen." And in an instant she disappeared as before.

When morning came, the King would have thought it all a dream : but there were the three golden apples on a plate, and one of them on the edge of it, just as he remembered the Princess had put it in her hurry. He looked at them : they were the most beautiful that he had ever seen, and their smell was sweeter than roses. Nevertheless for a whole day he reined in his greediness, and left them untouched. And the next day he looked at them again : but still he left them untouched. But on the third day he could resist the temptation no longer. "After all, I shall find some more beautiful Princess for my Queen," thought he : and so thinking, he lifted the first apple to his mouth. It was so sweet, that it was only two bites more to finish them all : but no sooner had he eaten the apples, than a deep sleep fell upon him, and he lay down as if dead.

When midnight struck, a loud noise was heard, which startled every man in the palace from his slumber. The guards seized their arms : and the Page ran to the King's room to see that no harm had befallen his master. But at that moment the King too awoke ; and the Fairy, in his proper shape, entered the room, leading in, no longer the fair Princess, but a terrible Bear, who without an instant's delay fell upon the King and began to tear him.

As well as he could, the King defended himself. But his strength was beginning to fail, when the

faithful Page entered the room. Seeing his master in such danger, he instantly levelled his lance, and drove it through the heart of the wild beast.

A sharp shriek followed : but at once the lance fell from his hand : and beside him again stood the Princess, unharmed, and in her full beauty.

Before he could recover from his astonishment, a loud bellowing was heard close to him. He found his lance once more in his hand, he knew not how : and turning round, he was just able to defend himself with it against another Bear, which, still carrying a crown on its head, rushed furiously at him. It was the King, who by command of the Fairy had been changed back to his former shape. "Strike him ! Strike him !" cried the Fairy. The Page at once pierced him to the heart, and he fell dead at their feet.

The Page now learned the meaning of what had happened : the dead King was hastily buried in the Abbey : and the Princess, by command of the Fairy, giving her hand in marriage to the faithful and charitable Page, he was made King of the land, and reigned long and happily over his subjects.

"When I was at the Zoological Gardens last Christmas," said one of the younger children, "I saw the bears ; and one of them climbed up a great pole, and held out his nose at me. O how I wish I had given him something to eat !" "But I did," said

another little one, "and he opened his mouth and ate the bun up : but he did not thank me for it." "Never mind," said Charles ; "I daresay he thought 'Thank you,' and wished himself a Princess for your sake."

"Hush !" cried Anna, who had now taken her place : "really, with your noise you children are quite unbearable."

"A pun—a pun ! a bad pun !" whispered Arthur : but Anna, smiling at him, began her story.

ANNA'S THIRD TALE

SELIM AND ABDALLAH

ONCE upon a time there was a certain nobleman, who dwelt in the city of Ispahan, the capital of Persia. He was very wealthy, and after the King's own, his palace was the most beautiful in the city. The roofs were held up by pillars of black polished marble ; the walls shone with gold and painted tiles ; and the floors were paved with little pieces of glass set in all manner of patterns, over which the richest carpets of cashmere were spread, like flowers upon flowers. But he was unmarried, and had no children to enjoy his great riches after him.

This nobleman had many followers and servants, and his court was almost as much crowded as the Khalif's. Over all was set the Keeper of his treasures

Selim. This Selim was a very crafty, wicked man : but he had one only daughter, Fatima, who was more beautiful than the moon, or than her famous namesake, the wife of the prophet Mohammed. She was very unlike her father in disposition, and was so gentle and good that every one loved her. Selim for a long while plotted to bring about a marriage between the nobleman and his daughter : but the nobleman had taken a vow to live and die childless : and it was said that he would leave his wealth to the great Mosque of Bagdat. When Selim discovered this, he was much enraged at his master, and in the wickedness of his heart he determined to avenge himself on him in any way that he could.

It was said that there was no one more learned in the whole city than this nobleman. Twice in every week he used to call the wise men around him, with those who studied religion and law ; and, sitting ranged in their several ranks in his presence, they used to consider and to discuss high and knotty questions. Now, one day, while he was sitting with them, there came into the assembly a stranger, clad in tattered clothing, who seated himself behind the rest in a distant place. And when they began the discussion—for it was the custom to propose questions to the different members, that by their answers they might show their wisdom,—the question was put to them by turns, till it came to the stranger : whereupon

he gave a better reply than the replies of all present : And the nobleman approved it, and ordered that he should be raised from the place which he had taken to a higher one. Then when the second question came to him, he gave a reply better than the first : and the nobleman ordered that he should be raised to a place of higher honour. And when the third question went round, he gave a reply better and more just than the two former replies : upon which the nobleman ordered that he should be placed in his own seat, above every one who was present.

The wise men then rose and went forth : but the nobleman prevented the stranger from going out with them : he called him into an inner room, and treated him with kindness. And after this the feast was prepared : the wine was brought forth, and carried round to the guests. But when it came round to the stranger, he rose up, and said, " If the master of the house give Abdallah permission, he will speak one word." And when the nobleman permitted him, he said, " The master of the house knows that I was to-day, in this noble assembly, one of the least known of the people ; and that he has raised me to a place near himself, and has lifted me up above the others. And now he desires to take from me that small degree of wisdom which has exalted me above my meanness. For if his slave drink wine, wisdom will go from him, and folly will draw near unto him, and

he will return to his former place, and become mean and worthless in the eyes of men. Abdallah trusts, therefore, that the wise man, the master of the house, will not rob his slave of this jewel."

When the nobleman heard these words he praised him, and caused him to sit again in his place. When Selim saw it, anger took possession of his heart, and jealousy that Abdallah should have been raised to such honour ; and he plotted to do him an injury.

But before the feast was ended, the nobleman ordered that a cup of sherbet (which is a kind of drink that Lucy would like, because it has plenty of sugar in it) should be brought round to each of the guests ; and they brought it to Selim first, and to Abdallah after him. And when Abdallah tasted it, he cried out to the nobleman, "There is poison in the cup !" and Abdallah saw Selim turn pale where he sat. But the nobleman did not see it, and he ordered his chief physician to be brought in. When the chief physician tasted the cup, he also said that it was poisoned. But no one knew who it was that had done this wicked thing.

Upon this, the nobleman, seeing the wisdom of Abdallah, appointed him to be his chamberlain. Every night he guarded him as he slept ; and every day he tasted the dishes as they were brought up, as is the custom in Persia.

But no one thought of the wicked Treasurer, though

it was he in truth who had mingled poison in the sherbet : and every day his anger increased against his master and against Abdallah, for his wisdom was so great that daily he grew in favour with the nobleman and with all who saw him : and at last it so happened that Fatima his daughter could not conceal the love that she bore Abdallah, for she had seen none who equalled him in goodness. But Selim for a while hid his anger in his bosom, and waited till he should see some fault, that so he might cause his ruin.

One day it chanced that Selim stood behind a screen in the great hall, where the nobleman sat and did justice between his servants ; and Abdallah came in, and knowing not that Selim was there, he threw himself at his master's feet, crying out,

“A favour, my lord ; a favour for thy servant !”

The nobleman inquired what was his desire.

“Let your Highness know,” said Abdallah, “that your slave loves Fatima, the daughter of the Keeper of the Treasures, and he begs you to speak to her father, and to command him that he give me his daughter in marriage, for this also is the desire of the heart of Fatima.”

The nobleman bade him rise, and promised that he would at once ask that Fatima should be given him ; for there was no one of all his friends whom he valued more than Abdallah.

But when he had gone forth, Selim came into his master's presence. His heart beat with rage ; but he hid it, from fear, lest otherwise he might fail in his purpose.

"Was it not Abdallah," said he, "who went forth from thy presence?"

The nobleman said, "It was ; and what of that?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing !" replied Selim ; "only I thought—indeed, I hardly know what I thought."

"What is it?—let the truth be spoken," said the nobleman, in great astonishment.

"The truth shall be spoken, in its own time and season," said Selim. "But is it not strange," continued he, "that Abdallah should never have made it known to your Highness who that wicked one might be who mingled poison in the cup on the day of the feast?"

"He has searched far and wide, but he can discover nothing," said the nobleman.

"Your wisdom knows best," said Selim. "The prophet is my witness with what grief I speak it ; but did not your Highness perceive, on that first day, how Abdallah would not drink the wine that the cup-bearers brought him ? And when the sherbet was poured out, I saw his countenance, and it was paler than snow."

"What is it then that the Treasurer thinks?" said the nobleman, grieved and alarmed ; for he did not suspect Selim's wickedness.

“Your slave remembers what the cupbearer told him ; for he is ready to declare before witnesses that Abdallah knows who it was that mingled poison in the goblet.”

“Who is he ? and what is his name ?” cried the nobleman. “But the Treasurer is fearful ; for if it were Abdallah who contrived this great crime—which Allah forbid !—would he himself have warned us of his own wickedness ?”

“Allah only reads the heart of man, and those only find who know where to seek,” answered Selim, dryly ; “to the poor man the gifts and honours of the rich are above life itself.”

The nobleman was astonished, and Selim, as he did not answer, continued, that if he were in his lord's place, he would desire to see the wisdom and discernment of Abdallah tried, before further confidence should be placed in him ; for he trusted his life in his hands, both at night, and daily, when the feast was spread before him. But Selim's hope was, that Abdallah might fail in the trial, and be cast out from the palace, and receive disgrace and punishment from his master.

The nobleman agreed to the proposal of Selim inwardly making up his mind, that if Abdallah did not fail, he would then cause Fatima to be given him in marriage. He called together his friends and servants, and fixed a day on which he would try their skill ; and

he who decided truly was to obtain whatever he chose to ask from the nobleman. And the trial was this :—a cup was to be given to each to taste, and they were to say what had been mingled with the water. Such trials are common in Persia ; and Abdallah, out of love for Fatima, was willing to show himself, if so it might be, worthy of her, and of the post of honour in which the nobleman had placed him.

When the day came, a sumptuous feast was spread in the great hall of the palace. Many little tables were laid out, one for each guest ; and on each table was set some one dish of great excellence and rarity, or some strange and costly wine. Before Selim was placed a plate of the honey-dates of the desert ; before the Mollah, or Judge, were put the apricots of Balkan ; and before Abdallah stood a cup of the rich wine of Sheraz, celebrated in the songs of so many poets. And they sat down, each in his place.

But Fatima, from whom the wickedness of her father could not entirely be hid, suspected that he had planned something against the life of Abdallah, and she sent a messenger, who came up quickly to him, and said, “In the name of the prophet, Fatima entreats that Abdallah should taste nothing of what is set before him.” Abdallah obeyed her word, and throughout the feast he tasted nothing ; but the guests ate of what had been provided for them.

And now the clashing of cymbals told the com-

pany that the trial was to begin. The nobleman took his seat on a throne at the end of the room ; cups of gold, which a slave filled with pure water from a silver ewer, were set in order on a table before him, one for each of those who had feasted. Each guest in turn, as he lifted the cup to his lips, was required to say what had been mingled with the water, and his answer was directly noted down by the Secretary. Each man gave a different judgment. To one guest the water seemed flavoured with almonds ; to another with musk ; to a third with pistachio-nuts. The Mollah was of opinion that apricots had been mingled in it ; Selim declared that dates or honey must have been placed in the cup. At last the turn came to Abdallah : he tasted, and said, "The water is from the fountain of the Rosegarden."

"Bring forth the silver ewer," said the nobleman. The silver ewer was brought forth, and lo, at the bottom of it lay one of the crimson roses of Ispahan.

Selim turned pale with rage ; but the guests shouted with surprize and pleasure, for they all loved Abdallah.

"What hast thou to ask of me ?" said the nobleman.

"I ask the hand of Fatima," answered Abdallah.

The nobleman fulfilled the word that he had given. Fatima was joined in marriage with Abdallah her beloved ; and he was made heir to the wealth of his master. Nor did Selim escape without a just reward ;

for rage and disappointment so worked on his heart, that on that very evening the Angel of Death, for so the Persians believe, was sent to summon him to judgment. And thus "the whirligig of Time brought about his revenges."

"But I don't see how it was that Abdallah tasted the rose-leaves in the water," cried Lucy; "you have not told us that, Anna."

"That is left to my little girl's wits to discover," said Mrs. Wentworth.

"It is for the same reason that we take white paper to write on," said Arthur, laughing: "now listen to me, and wipe out of your head for the present what you have heard from Anna."

ARTHUR'S THIRD TALE

THE THIEF IN THE FAMILY

A PARTY of children were assembled together, as we are now, to spend a rainy afternoon. There were seven in all. Five belonged to the family of Captain Ward, of whom Edmund and Lucy were the eldest; and there were two cousins, Robert and Arthur Robinson.

Captain and Mrs. Ward were very kind and sensible

people ; for the most part they let their children find amusement for themselves, but they would step in to help them if matters seemed to be at a stand-still. So it was on the day of which I am speaking. The morning had gone by pleasantly enough—in chess, ball, battledore and shuttlecock, and other games. When tired of these the children had amused themselves with looking over a collection of curiosities which Captain Ward had brought with him from India, where he had served many years before with his regiment. There were long taper lances, the “curst Malayan crease” or flame-like sword, which all eyed with fear, as its edges were *said* to be poisoned ; great leather shields, set round with brass nail-heads ; worked slippers from China, that gave one the cramp to look at them ; and, above all, a huge ugly mask, cut out of a solid block of ebony wood, which the priests used to put on, in the more distant villages, when they desired to astonish the natives.

But the afternoon went by very slowly, in spite of all. Arthur Robinson proposed that they should play cards. Lucy said their father did not object, provided they did not play for money ; but this the two cousins declared would be stupid, and “mere girl’s work.” So they sat with their hands before them, when Mrs. Ward came suddenly into the play-room.

“I have a new kind of game for you, children,” said she. Their faces brightened up, and she told

them her plan. There was a beautiful china cup, with silver filagree round it, which the Captain had brought over from Turkey. This Mrs. Ward said should be given as a prize to the child who should write the best little essay or story on a subject which she would set them.

The children entered readily into the plan: paper and ink were fetched by Edmund, and they all sat down to work, and to scribble as fast as they could, on the appointed subject: "Honesty is the best Policy." They were to finish what they had to say by tea-time, and the prize was to be given the next afternoon, as soon as Mrs. Ward should have time to read over their essays, and judge which was the best deserving.

But little was said during the rest of the afternoon. Pen-feathers were greedily nibbled; many eyes were anxiously directed to the carpet, and the ceiling appeared to furnish excellent hints; but, on the whole the work seemed to prosper very fairly.

When tea-time arrived a general buzz of conversation was set up. Edmund said not a syllable on what he had written; Arthur Robinson boasted that he was safe to win, for he had often done such things before at school; and Lucy Ward, like a girl, chattered about her production till every one knew what she had said, and what jokes she had put in it.

("Listen to that," whispered some of Arthur's little hearers.

"He says, *chattered like a girl*," cried Lucy Wentworth.)

In the evening the two cousins found themselves together in one corner of the room, and the following conversation took place :

"I say, Robert, I am sure you or I shall win. The others are all such children."

"I don't know that," answered Robert ; "you know it is not at all as it was at school, when we could give each other hints."

"Do you remember last half, how I got the prize over that young Horrid Richardson?" said Arthur, laughing unpleasantly ; "I looked over his shoulder, saw all that he was writing, and managed so well that no one found out I had copied."

"I suppose you don't see any harm in being a thief when one improves what one steals," replied his brother. "But, I'll tell you what," said he, mysteriously, drawing close up to Arthur, "if you haven't looked sharp, I know who will get the prize."

"Who?"

"Why, Lucy. She showed me her writing just now, and I am sure it is the cleverest any of the Wards have done ; and Madam Ward will be sure to give it to one of hers, if she can."

"Humph!" said Arthur, and talked of something else.

Next morning, after breakfast, the prize-writings

were to be given up to Mrs. Ward. Everybody brought theirs, sealed up with great precaution—except Lucy. Her mother inquired, with surprise, why she was empty-handed?

Lucy could but too easily give an explanation. She had written out her performance like the rest, had sealed it up, and left it, just before she went to bed, on the top shelf of the little book-case, between the windows in the play-room. But now there was no sign of it. She had reached right and left, but to no purpose.

“It is a very odd thing, Mary,” said the Captain to his wife, when the children had gone off for the morning; “but I can’t help thinking that there is something awkward about Lucy’s paper.”

“About its disappearance, you mean, I suppose?”

“Exactly. I really should be very sorry if it is so, but I cannot but fear that the two Robinson boys have had a hand in it. I heard them whispering last night something about Lucy’s getting the prize; and Arthur turned very red this morning when her paper was not forthcoming.”

“Don’t say so!” cried Mrs. Ward. “That would be shocking indeed. I shall almost rather it was one of our own children, if such a thing has been done.”

“Don’t let us say so,” replied her husband. “The blame on the right head!—there is no other rule. And I have heard whispers of their conduct at school

which, unfortunately, lead me to think it not unlikely that in this case poor Lucy may have suffered from their lax notions of honesty."

"You always make up your mind so fast, my love."

"The servants say they know nothing about it, and that they met Mr. Arthur coming out of the play-room early this morning," observed Mr. Ward, slowly.

"At any rate, we will question them all round; perhaps, after all, it is but an accident."

"If the worst comes to the worst, I think my Indian recollections will supply me with an excellent mode of trial," answered her husband. And they at once set to work to make inquiries.

No trace of the thief appeared; and, in place of the prize-giving, Captain Ward ordered the whole party, servants included, to assemble in his library at one o'clock—"For it is a serious matter," said he; "the paper cannot have lost itself, and I cannot suffer any thieves in my family, be they who they may."

One o'clock came. The children started as they entered the library, for the shutters were mostly closed. In the half-darkness they could, however, see a bench placed behind a table, on which lay a paper bag filled with rice. Mrs. Ward ranged the whole party behind the bench. An awful silence prevailed, and every one's heart beat strongly when Captain Ward, stepping to the table, in a grave, firm tone, said,—

"The room will presently be darkened, that so the

truth may clearly appear. I have often seen this trial practised in the East, and it never failed of success ; it is true natural magic."

So saying, he ordered all to place the left hand behind the back, and to hold forth the right. In each hand he placed a few grains of rice. Then closing the remaining window-shutter, he again said—

"I shut out the light that the truth may appear. Let each person place the rice within his mouth. But woe to the wrong-doer ! for a sure sign will separate the guilty from the innocent."

There was another awful moment of silence. Most of the party placed the rice within their mouths and swallowed it without difficulty. But Arthur's knees shook under him. "Perhaps it will cause me some dreadful illness if I taste it," thought he. But then again, he remembered, he should assuredly be discovered if he did not follow the order given. That moment seemed to him an hour of agony. He lifted his hand to his mouth ; but fear and his evil conscience so wrought within him that he was unable to swallow the rice : something seemed to grow within his throat : he thought that he would be suffocated : and forgetting everything else, he called out "Water ! Water ! or I shall die." And the children shuddered as they heard him.

At this moment the window-shutters were thrown open : daylight again flooded the room : and all eyes

were turned on Arthur. But before Captain Ward could speak a word, the unhappy boy was on his knees before him.

“Forgive me—forgive me!” he cried. “It was I—no one else is to blame—it was I who took Lucy’s paper—no one else is to blame.”

“Let all leave this room but *one*,” said the Captain, sternly. They obeyed: Arthur alone remained, as if fixed to the spot where he was kneeling.

“Oh, forgive him—pray forgive him,—it is partly my fault for talking—indeed it is,” whispered Lucy, with tears, as she passed her father. He pressed her hand and said nothing, but, following the rest, with his wife, locked and double-locked the door behind him.

Left to himself, Arthur had full time to think over what he had done. With many bitter tears he repented, not only of this, but of other similar bad actions into which evil example and thoughtlessness had led him. He begged that Captain Ward should come and speak to him: and that he judged Arthur’s repentance sincere was shown by what followed.

At three o’clock the sound of a bell called the children into the drawing-room. Mr. and Mrs. Ward stood by a table, covered with opened papers. Arthur sat, covering his face, in silence beside them.

Lucy went up and gently took his hands. "If you forgive him,"—began her father.

"Oh, papa ;—if I forgive him ! Indeed I do, with all my heart," cried she, in tears.

"Lucy ! oh, Lucy !" he sobbed out : "I have deeply sinned ; I know I have,—and I am deeply sorry. Fix what punishment you please, sir," continued he, looking up at his uncle : "I have deserved it,—and I trust that I can bear it."

"If she forgives you, it is enough," answered the Captain. "For it is she whom you have visibly injured. But pray that you may be forgiven elsewhere—for it is not she alone against whom you have offended."

There was a minute's silence. The children looked at the papers, and thought how sadly the amusement of the day had been broken up.

"We will forget what has happened," said Mrs. Ward, kindly, "for Arthur I am sure will not. We have read these papers," she continued more cheerfully ; "there is none in which there is not something good : but we have had no difficulty in settling which is the best. The prize is given to my dear Lucy."

All the children clapped their hands ; but Lucy felt as if she wished she had never written, and was ready to burst into tears.

A look, however, from her mother gave her strength. She sent her feelings home, and kept quiet whilst

Captain Ward, taking up her paper, with a firm and clear voice read—

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

“Honesty is the best Policy,”—as the pig squeaked out, when the thief caught him by the ear, and the farmer ran out and caught the thief by the coat-tail. “Honesty is the best Policy,”—as the sailor said, when he took a lick, on the sly, in the treacle-bucket, and found it was full of—tar! “Is Honesty the best Policy?” thought little Barbara S——, when she found the stage-manager had given her a guinea in place of a shilling,—“for he is a careless man, and will never discover it. And then, my little sisters have no stockings. Yes,—Honesty *is* the best Policy—for if I give it back, he will trust me always, and One Who has seen me, though I see Him not, will not leave me in poverty.”

“But what is Honesty?” said Jack Falstaff, when he had robbed the carrier at Gadshill—“What has been conveyed to me, or by me, should I not keep it? But Conscience pricks me. Yea, but it is no matter. Can Conscience find me gold?—No. Or a new horse and doublet?—No. Or a cup of wine?—No. Can Conscience steal poverty away?—No. Conscience hath no skill in wealth then?—No. What is Conscience?—A word. What is in that word Conscience? What is that Conscience?—Air. What is that Honesty?—Air. Therefore I’ll none of it.”

“ But not so, o' my conscience,” said Prince Hal ; and as he spoke, he poked him, till the gold pieces fell from under the fat Knight's girdle.—“ Not so ! Speak softly, Sir John, when the watch is nigh.—To prison, Sir John—to prison ! What sayest thou concerning Honesty ? What should the King do, without Honesty ? Will thieving fit him with a Crown ? Will thieving bind it fast on his forehead ? Will thieving give him rest under it ?—And what should the Kingdom do, without Honesty ? Will thieving make it rich ? Will thieving keep it at peace with neighbours ? Will thieving be its guard—its army ?—And what should the Subject do, without Honesty ? Will thieving make his corn to grow ? Will thieving make his purse heavy ?—yea—marry—but will not thieving empty it ? Will it give a man sleep o' nights ? Will it keep his house in order, his men honest, and his wife loving ? Will thieving make his heart light ? Will it bind up his wounds ? Will it feed him ? Will it give him salt to his bread ? Will it give him wine for water ? Will it keep him from prison, Sir John ? Will it keep him from prison ? Will it keep him from the rope ?—and what after, Sir John, and what after ? ”

“ I know who has stolen what,” said Charles—
“ and whence he has cribbed it—but no matter ! ”

“ I have treated it so, that I fear I have made

it my own," replied Arthur, making way for the next speaker.

EMILY'S THIRD TALE

CERISA

THERE were once a Husband and Wife, who had lived long together, but, to their great grief, they had no children. But at last, when they had almost given up hoping for it, it appeared likely that there would be a little one in the cradle.

It happened one day, about this time, that they were standing together at the window of their room, looking out into a garden which lay below them. "Husband" said the Wife, "I must have some of those cherries to eat, or else I am sure I shall fall ill and die."—"Another day," said he, and kissed her.

This garden, I must tell you, belonged to a Witch, and no one ever dared to go into it, although the finest fruit-trees in the whole world grew there, and you could see the topmost boughs of the cherry-tree, covered with fruit as bright as rubies, over the boundary wall. But every day the wife begged her husband to bring her the cherries, saying that she should fall ill and die if she did not have them to eat, till he knew not what to do, and was in great trouble of mind.

At last, one day, he said to himself, "Come what may come, it must be done." So he climbed over the high wall, and gathering in all haste a bough from the cherry-tree, laden with the ruby fruit, he brought it to his wife. She found them even better than she had expected, and next day nothing would serve but he must again climb over into the garden. But on the third day, no sooner did he lay his hand on a bough, than the Witch ran out of her house: her eyes glowed like coals of fire, and her breath withered whatever it fell on.

In vain he tried to excuse himself for the theft by telling of his wife's illness. She cursed him with every evil under the sun. At last, however, his words and prayers seemed to move her, and she said, "The theft I will pardon: but on this one condition, that as soon as your child is born, you shall give it up to me." And in his fear, hardly knowing what he was about, the man agreed to the condition.

In due time a pretty little girl made her appearance. The Husband, who had forgotten his promise, was rejoicing over the baby with his wife, when the Witch suddenly appeared and demanded that Cerisa (so they had called her from a red cherry-mark on her right shoulder) should be given up to her.

The parents wept and lamented. There really never was such a pitiful sight since little babies were

born and heard of. But meantime Cerisa lay fast asleep in her cradle, and never took any notice of what her papa and mamma were saying about her. They begged so hard, that at last the Witch agreed to leave their child with them; only, if she tasted any of the cherries that grew in the Witch's garden, she was to be given up to her "without any further nonsense."

Cerisa grew up the most beautiful maiden under the sky. When she was fourteen years old, one day, walking by the garden-wall, she saw one long branch, which had overshot it and hung down temptingly within her reach, covered with the ruby cherries. "I am only forbidden to go into the garden," thought she; "I may gather one of these cherries without doing wrong." But the moment it touched her lips she found herself carried swiftly through the air, and lodged at the top of a high Tower, from the window of which she could see nothing but trees, trees, trees all round her.

Then she sat down and wept the day away. But when evening came she heard the Witch calling out below the Tower,—

Cerisa, Cerisa,
Let down your golden locks.

Now Cerisa had very long, beautiful hair, as fine as spun gold: and when she heard this, she untied

the ribbon from her head, looked out through the window, and let her ringlets fall down—full fifty feet—to the ground; and then the Witch climbed up by them as by a ladder into the Tower.

So every day she came, and brought Cerisa food, that she might not die, and then beat her and cruelly used her. And Cerisa sat always at the window and sang, though her heart was ready to break.

But one day it happened that a young Prince was hunting in the forest around the Tower. He came to the foot of it, and when he looked up he saw the lovely Cerisa at the window, and heard her singing with her sad, sweet voice, till, as he looked and whilst he listened, he fell in love with the fair maiden. But as there was no door to the Tower, and the window was high up above his reach, he knew not what to do; however, he hid himself in the bushes close by, and watched, to see if any luck was in store for him. And at evening came the wicked Witch, and she stood beneath the Tower, and called out,

Cerisa, Cerisa,
Let down your golden locks.

Then the Prince saw what the ladder was by which people could get into the Tower. He thought it was a very charming kind of ladder, and that he should much like to have a nice climb up it. So next morn-

ing, as soon as it was dawn, he came alone to the same place, and called out,

Cerisa, Cerisa,
Let down your golden locks.

Cerisa wondered who it might be, as the Witch had left her an hour before day-break. But, without stopping to think a minute (you know she was only fourteen years old, *ONLY* fourteen), she lowered her golden hair, and it hung down fifty feet, to the very base of the Tower.

O how surprized and a little frightened she was when, instead of the frightful Witch, there stood before her a handsome young Prince ! But he was so gentle and good, that she soon began to love him in return, as wise people say, "Love me, and I'll love you." All day he stayed with her, and when night came he went down from the chamber by the same way as he had entered it ; and so it went on for many days ; for the Prince did not know what to do without his little wife with the ladder-locks : for so he called Cerisa.

But at last, one unlucky evening—whether Cerisa was in a bad humour or not, I cannot say—when the Witch appeared at the foot of the Tower, and was climbing up into the chamber, Cerisa called out to her, "Make haste, old mother !" (for now that she had some one to care for her she was less afraid of

the Witch), "and climb up, for you are not nearly so light a weight as the Prince."

"Ah, you wicked child! What is it that you say!" screamed out the old woman; "but I will punish you for it."

So she took Cerisa's hair, twisted it round her left hand, and pulling out a great pair of shears, she went snip, snip, snip, till it was all cut off. Then turning to Cerisa with a terrible fierce look, she blew on her face, and in a moment Cerisa found herself lying alone in a little wretched hut, in the midst of a vast wilderness; and there she spent many days, weeping and lamenting, and ready to perish with hunger. And the Witch took poor Cerisa's beautiful hair and fastened it well to a hook that stuck out by the window.

But next morning the Prince presented himself at the foot of the Tower. He called out,

Cerisa, Cerisa,
Let down your golden locks.

The Witch let the hair fall down, and when the Prince had climbed up, he found some one very different from Cerisa waiting to receive him.

"You had better take me for your Cerisa," she said, grinning at him with a horrible grin, "for you will never see her any more; never—never—never."

And with that she flung him headlong from the Tower ; and when he rose up, bruised and aching from the fall, he found himself in utter blindness.

Then the unhappy Prince wandered day and night groping his way through the forest ; and as he went he still called out, "Cerisa—Cerisa !" but no one answered him. At last a Dove, as she sat on a tree with her mate, pitying him, flew down and said :

"Go to the Witch's garden, and gather three cherries from the tree. The Witch will pursue after you, but fear not ; throw down the cherries in her path, and go on your way to the wilderness of Eremia ; there will you find the lovely Cerisa."

The Prince thanked the bird and went on his way, and the Dove flew before him ; and every now and then with a soft *coo*, she guided him in safety till he reached the garden. Everything fell out as the Dove had prophesied. The Prince plucked the cherries ; and presently he heard the Witch running after him with loud cries and curses. He tasted one of the cherries and flung the stone on the ground. Directly, a terrible Bloodhound arose on the place, and fell furiously on the Witch ; but she threw the hound a piece of bread, which quieted him, and at once the Prince heard the sound of her great feet coming after him. So he threw down the second cherry-stone. This became a Wolf, who sprang at the Witch's throat, and would have stifled her, but she grasped him

tightly by the neck till he fell dead; and again she ran after the Prince. Every moment she gained on him, when he threw down the only remaining cherry-stone: a huge Lion immediately appeared, who rushed on the wicked woman, and tore her limb from limb amidst her loud screams and curses.

Then the Prince knew that he was safe. He groped his way in blindness to the desert of Eremia; and presently he heard a sweet voice singing,

Come thro' the wild wood,
Come thro' the wilderness;
Here is thy loved one
Lying in wretchedness.

Hark how the wild wolves
Howl thro' the wilderness:
Come to thy loved one,
Save her from wretchedness.

The Prince knew it was Cerisa, and his heart leapt within him. Hastily he ran on, and fell on her neck. "Art thou come!" said she. "I have waited for thee long—long,"—and the tears rose in her eyes. But two of them fell upon the Prince as he embraced her: they touched his eye-balls, and at once his sight was restored to him, clear and bright, as it had been of old. And he took Cerisa with him from the wilderness to his palace, where they spent their lives together in peace and happiness.

"How I like those fairy stories!" cried one of the little children, "I like them *so* much: they always end so pleasantly."

"Bread and butter at first, and plum-cake to finish, I suppose," said Arthur, stroking the child's hair. "Don't you wish everything would end so, Margaret?"

"Oh, but why does it not?" said she.

"That's more than I can tell," answered Arthur.

"Then it ought," cried she.

"If it did," said Mrs. Wentworth, "for one thing, you would not care to hear fairy stories. But it is getting late, dear, so do not let us interrupt Eleanor: I see she is in a hurry to begin, and has got something good to give us."

"Don't, *please*, Mrs. Wentworth," said Eleanor, "you confuse me *so*."

Every one looked grave and good, and in a few moments the speaker was ready.

ELEANOR'S THIRD TALE

THE POOR NOBLE

THERE was in the city of Florence a certain widow lady of high birth and great beauty, named Gabriella. Her husband had left her with only one child, to whom, by the last will of his father, his great riches

were to go so soon as he should come of age. But meanwhile, as Gabriella was still young and beautiful, there were many among the nobles of the city who sought her hand in marriage. The most distinguished of these was the Count Leonardo, a young man, who in birth, in riches, and in honour, appeared well worthy to gain the love of Gabriella. Every day he would command his trumpet to be sounded in the great square of the city, and proclamation to be made that he was ready to engage in fight with any one who denied that Gabriella was the fairest of living ladies. And if any one was so bold as to accept the challenge, Leonardo would speedily ride against him, lance in hand, and, unhorsing him, compel him to own the truth which he had so rashly called in question. And in all other noble exercises he strove to distinguish himself, by the courtesy of his words and manners approving himself in the sight of the inhabitants of all Florence, as the worthiest person to win the lady's love. And every day he would give sumptuous feasts within his palace-hall, not only to display his magnificence and liberality, but more especially for this reason, because he knew that Gabriella, who had been delicately brought up from her youth, delighted somewhat beyond measure in such entertainments.

But for all this he could not gain one word or look of love from the fair Gabriella. She listened to the

songs, in which he spoke the praises of her beauty : she sat at his table, drank of his wines and joined with him in the dance : but her heart seemed cold and hardened against his love. How cruel she was ! Love for love seemed of no use with her ! But, you see, this is not a fairy story, but something that really went on in the world as it is.

Now it came to pass that when Count Leonardo had lived for some while after this fashion, spending his wealth as if it had no bounds, and gaining nothing in return, his riches began to fail him. And at last only a small country-house was left : and of all his treasures none remained except a single tame pheasant, which many months before he had received as a gift of courtesy from Gabriella, and which he now kept and valued in remembrance of one by whom he was already forgotten. And, as he still loved her as much as ever, and could no longer keep up in Florence the state suitable to his rank, he retired to the country-house. And there he spent his days—working with his own hands in the little garden to raise such simple food as he could live on, and amusing himself at leisure times with the tame pheasant. And thus with the utmost patience did he bear the weight of his poverty.

After a while Gabriella also, growing weary, as was thought, of the gaiety and amusements of the city, retired to live for a while in her beautiful country

palace, which stood in the neighbourhood of the cottage in which Leonardo had settled. And her son, who came with her, before long renewing his knowledge of the Count, would spend great part of the day with him, hearing from him the many tales of adventures by land and sea, which Leonardo had gone through, and amusing himself also with the beautiful pheasant, till, as was natural to a boy, a great wish to possess the bird entered into his mind, although he did not know how he should gain a treasure which was so precious in the eyes of its master.

And as things were thus, it so happened that the boy fell sick. His mother, who had no other child, and loved him dearly, was much grieved, and all day long she would be about his bed, waiting upon him, and giving him what comfort she could. Often she would ask him, if there was anything which he specially longed for, begging him not to hide it from her, as she would send to the ends of the world to gain it for him, if it were possible. At last, one day, when the child had heard his mother frequently speak thus, he said, "Mother, if you could procure for me Count Leonardo's tame pheasant, for me to look at and to play with, I think I should speedily recover." When the lady heard this, she kept silence for a while, and thought within herself how she should act. She knew how long Leonardo had loved her, and that he had never received from her any return

of love. "How can I," she thought, "send to beg him for a treasure, which, as I hear, he prizes so dearly? How can I take from him the only thing left on which he sets a value? And yet, were I to beg it of him, I know well, he would grant it." But then, again, when she turned to her child, and saw him lie there in sickness, love for him conquered every other thought: and come what would, she de-



termined that, without sending any other messenger, she would herself go and beg the gift from Leonardo.

And when she said this to her child, he was at once comforted, and his health began to return to him. So next morning Gabriella, taking with her another lady for companionship, set off for the little cottage of Leonardo. It was early ; and the Count, according to his wont, was at his labour in the garden. And when he heard that the Lady Gabriella was at the door, he went to meet her : wondering within himself what it might be that had brought her thither. But when Gabriella saw him, with courtesy and pleasure she gave him greeting, and said, " I am come to make Count Leonardo amends for the losses he has suffered from love of me : and these are the amends—that I shall this day give him my company, and shall partake of entertainment beneath his roof."—" I have sustained no loss through Gabriella," answered he, courteously ; " all that has made my life happy, on the contrary, I have received from you, Lady : and if I cannot now welcome you with due honour, as of old, it is not owing to my will, but to my poverty." And with these words he led the ladies within his cottage : and, going forth into the garden, there for a time he left them.

But Leonardo walked up and down the garden in agony : for he remembered how of old Gabriella delighted in feasts and in magnificence : and now, so deep was his poverty, that he knew not whence he could provide anything to set before her. Now, for

the first time, he truly felt the full depth of his ill fortune. Now, for the first time after so many days, she whom he so dearly loved was beneath his roof. Now, for the first time, he was unable to do her honour. He remembered her tastes, and thought he must make ready a little feast fit for so fair a lady. But there was nothing proper in the cottage; for Leonardo himself lived very simply: and besides that, you know, he was not in that good fairy-land, where wishing is having, but, as I have said, in the world as it is. What should he do? Right and left he looked, but he could find nothing. Turning his eyes at last upward, there before him, on its perch, he saw his much-valued favourite. Without hesitation, but not without tears, he called the pheasant down. It perched on his hand: and then, as if knowing for what service it was required, it gave up its life, in obedience to its master's wishes.

Leonardo, giving the bird to his servant to take to the fire, returned to the cottage. And there, in gay conversation, the time went by till the table was spread; and Leonardo, sitting down with his guests, and soon forgetting everything that had passed, in the joy of Gabriella's presence, ate of the pheasant with the ladies, who had no thought of the sacrifice to which poverty had driven him. And when it was now time to depart, Gabriella turned to Leonardo, and in a gentle voice reminded him of the days that

were past, and of the love which he had borne her. "But if you could know the love which mothers bear to their children," she said, "you would not, as you must do, wonder at my presence, but would rather excuse and honour me. I have indeed a request to make to you—and a request for that which you prize as your last remaining treasure. But I ask it—not for the love which you bear me, which gives me no claim to ask, but for that honour and nobility of soul in which you are distinguished above your fellows, knowing that you will esteem it a high thing if by the gift of the bird you can save the life of my child, who is sick, and whose mind in that gift alone can see a remedy."

But Leonardo could only answer by tears. This was the first gift that Gabriella had requested from him: it was the only gift that she could request from him: and he was utterly unable to give it. Mistaking his silence, she had begun to fear that she had asked for what was too precious to be granted, even to her, when Leonardo, looking up, thus addressed her:—

"Lady, since the time when first it was the will of Heaven that I should place my love on you, in many ways I have had to feel the spite of fortune. But before that which has now fallen upon me, other evils appear as nothing. For now, when you have come beneath this poor roof, and begged

of me a favour, such as in the days of my wealth you never asked, things so are that I am unable to grant it."

And then Leonardo informed Gabriella of what had happened; of his great poverty; of the straits in which he had found himself how to supply a feast in any way worthy of his guests; and of the only possible means left, to which at last necessity had driven him. And then, in proof of what he had said, he threw down before Gabriella the beak and the long tail-feathers of the favourite pheasant. Then Gabriella, seeing what had befallen, wept bitter tears; and without uttering one word more, rising up, she courteously bowed her head to Leonardo, and returned in silence to her palace.

And as she went, Gabriella thought of the poverty of Count Leonardo, and of his nobleness, and of the love which he had shown towards her. And then she thought with fear and terror on her sick child, lest when he heard the news she had to bring his illness should return upon him. And so it was; for when the sick child heard the news which Gabriella had to bring, his illness came back upon him, and he turned his head to the wall, and so died.

But when the time of mourning was over, Gabriella sought out her brothers in the city of Florence, and said to them :—

"A second time, as you see, am I now left alone, and my wealth is a burden and a weight to me. And so, having taken counsel with myself, it is my mind henceforth to offer to share all I have with the Count Leonardo."

On this her brothers mocked at Gabriella, saying—

"Will you give yourself to one who is in such poverty?"

But she answered them:—

"I know well, my brothers, that as you say, so it is. But it is better to find a man who needs wealth, than wealth that stands in need of an owner. And again: better is nobleness of heart with poverty of station, than nobility of station with poverty of heart. I was against it once, and you are now. I am sorry, but so it must be; I cannot help it;—Love can do more than any two of us."

And so, returning to the cottage of Count Leonardo, the Lady Gabriella gave him her hand; and throughout the course of their lives a blessing from above rested upon them.

"A satisfactory close to the day's work," said Mrs. Wentworth. "For the sake of the little ones I might perhaps have wished that a fairy story had taken the last place; but this I suppose would have broken in on your arrangement. And indeed, Eleanor, no one can deny, that, as they say, your

story leaves us with a sweet taste in our mouths for the evening."

"Stolen waters are often sweet," said Arthur, with a wise air: "I thought she turned that difficult sentence, *Love can do more*, very neatly."

"We must not be too severe on the whence and the wherefore of our story-tellers," replied the lady. "How little has any man—even the most productive genius—that he can truly call his own! What he gives—even a Shakespeare—is hardly more than a better re-arrangement of existing materials. And this is especially the case in regard to tales, the plots of which seem to be, like the sun and air, the common property of mankind. For my part," she ended, rising, "I am glad to see that Eleanor has turned to such good account her knowledge of Italian."

And with these words Mrs. Wentworth led the little party to the conservatory. The central space had been cleared out, and was occupied for this occasion by a long table, on which cakes, fruit, and wine were arranged in quantities. And as the children, in their light dresses and most smiling looks, sat down to the feast, surrounded with the gay flowers and cheerful green leaves of plants, that seemed to have caught some part of the brilliancy of a southern sun and carried it with them to our own darker climate—the whole formed a prettier picture, even, than those

which the little story-tellers had set before the company, and there was hardly any kind of taste, in all the senses of the word, which would not have been pleased to be there.—I wish we all had !

END OF THE THIRD DAY



THE MAN WITHOUT A NOSE

FOURTH DAY

Lilies, cowslips, violets, roses,
All are sweet in children's posies.

OUR party may, as the reader will perhaps have seen, be divided into two classes: Tale bearers and Tale hearers: or again, into moveable and constant listeners—to the former of whom, by right of age, belonged the arrangement and the choice of subjects.

When all had assembled for the Fourth day, a spirit of triumph appeared among the latter class: it had got out among them that this was to be the last day but one of their English afternoon entertainments; and the meaning and limits of the series now became clear to them.

“There are only two subjects left on which you are to amuse us,” said Lucy Wentworth,—“we can guess them!”

“Only we do not know which will come first,” said the little Margaret.

Arthur, laughing, answered, "Perhaps, to find out that, you will have nothing to do but to follow your——"

"We know what," cried the little ones together—"you need not tell us."

"Begin then, first story-teller," said Mrs. Wentworth;" they will soon see whether they are on the right scent or no."

And on this Eleanor stepped forward and took her place at the rosewood table.

ELEANOR'S FOURTH TALE

THE MAN WITHOUT A NOSE

"So we are to have a new General to command the Palace Guards," said Isabella, the Queen of Hungary, to the great Court Chamberlain.

"It is so, your Highness," answered he; "Baron Seneff has been specially selected for this duty by His Majesty, as one of the bravest officers and most courteous gentlemen in the whole of his army."

"He served in the battle of Popumoff, if I remember rightly," said the Queen.

"He did so, of course, your Highness," said the Chamberlain—trying to remember whether the Baron was born or not at the date of the battle, and what

the battle was about,—“and there, and in all other engagements he greatly distinguished himself.”

“Let him be presented to me as soon as he shall arrive,” said the Queen, leaving the chamber.

“What a memory our gracious Queen has,” said the Chamberlain, addressing himself to Louise von Ente, the Maid of Honour who remained on duty to watch the royal lap-dog. Her business was to keep his tail out of the cream-saucer, and his nose in it. “But this Baron Seneff, as I said, greatly distinguished himself somewhere ; indeed, he may be said to have been distinguished by the battle whether he would or not—for it is a very strange thing ; but in the thick of the fight he received a blow aimed full on the face from a Turkish battle-axe, which, passing downwards, cut clean off his——”

And here the Chamberlain paused for a moment to take a pinch of fine Roumelian snuff.

“I perfectly understand you—perfectly,” said Louise, looking as if she had heard some shocking story ; “pray say no more, it will be quite sufficiently dreadful to have to look at him when he comes.”

“The Lord High Chamberlain is required by His Majesty,” said a servant entering the room at this instant. The Chamberlain obeyed at once. And though while assisting His Majesty to pull off the royal top-boots he wondered to himself what it was that Louise had taken into her head about the Baron

Seneff, yet the important duty in which he was engaged soon drove the whole conversation out of his memory.

Louise ran off with her budget of news to the waiting-room, where the Maids of Honour and the chief Officers belonging to the Court were wont to assemble.

"News! news!" she cried. "The new General in Charge will be here this afternoon; but," she added, in a cheerful tone, "there is one shocking thing about him—you will never guess what—he has got no ——"

And here Louise took out her embroidered pocket-handkerchief.

"No *what?*" said the First Usher, Count Moucheron, in a tone of deep anxiety.

"No nothing—I really cannot say what," replied Louise, who was suffering under a severe cold, applying her handkerchief to its natural duty.

"No I see what," said the Usher, taking a pinch of snuff.

"This, I suppose," said Clémentine de l'Epinglerie, holding up the back of a letter, on which she had sketched an outstretched hand, the thumb of which was placed against the lower point of a small triangle.

"No *what?*" said the Countess Lady of the Bed-chamber—almost with a scream.

“Allow me to offer you—a pleasure which you are happily not incapacitated from enjoying,” replied the First Usher, gravely, as he first tapped and then opened the lid of his jewel-set snuff-box.

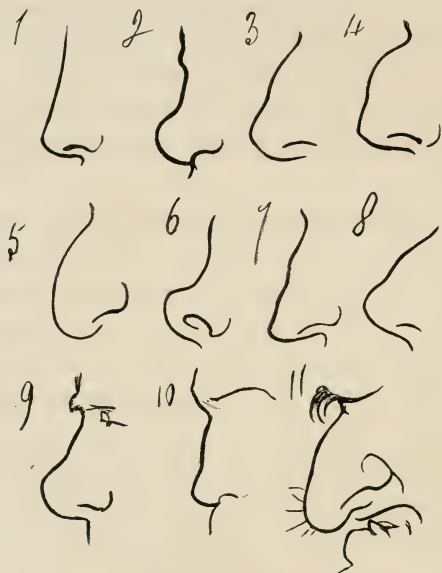
“Bless me—I beg your Highness’s pardon—indeed I do,” cried the Usher, as the Countess sneezed violently, and the Maids of Honour all sneezed at the same moment in sympathy. “I must have taken my mustard-pot snuff-box, as His Majesty calls it, by mistake.”

“You cannot wish *me* surely to be without—without a—you know what,” said the Lady, in a sagacious tone. “But what are you sketching there, Clémentine?” added she, taking the paper from her hand with an inquisitive air. “And here it is, by good luck,” said Eleanor: holding up a sheet of paper.

“Just think” said Clémentine, “that when Nature has provided so many, in her pomp and prodigality, that he should have——neither the true Grecian (1) (such as Venus had); nor the genuine Pug (2); nor the Roman (3); nor the W-ll-ngt-n (4); nor the Hebrew (5); nor the Cockney (6); nor the Withered (7) (even that would be better then none); nor the R-y-l (8) that we see on old half-pence; nor my Lord B——m (9); nor the Michelangelo-esque (10) (though that was produced by accident); nor even the Witch’s (11).

"Why, he is a Witch in armour, I am convinced," said the First Usher.

"Could it not possibly be mended—restored, I mean?"



Clémentine

CLÉMENTINE'S SKETCH

said the sprightly young La Juliers, the Queen's favourite Maid of Honour. "I have heard of wax being employed with success in such cases."

"Not in so hot a climate as Hungary, I believe," answered the First Usher. "Think for a moment: it might run down."

"Oh—my Lord!—oh!" screamed the Maids of Honour together: "that would be too shocking to contemplate."

"I shall insist on his wearing a mask," said the Countess, gravely. "He will not suffer any inconvenience; there may be holes for the eyes, mouth, and——"

"Those will be sufficient," said the Usher, taking up the sentence.

"I have news for you all," said Her Majesty, entering the room at this moment, with a gracious smile; "news that will please you. Our new Commanding Officer of the Household Troops, Baron Seneff, will be here this afternoon. He must be treated with great respect, for he is altogether an extraordinary character, and I regret that no apartment has yet been provided for him. But an old soldier, like the Baron, who has gone through so much rough work, and has no——"

"No—no;—is it really so?" exclaimed the Lady of the Bedchamber in her tremulous quaver.

"No objection to the makeshift quarters; must put up with a temporary bedroom for the night," continued the Queen, gravely, signing to the Ladies present to accompany her to her dressing-room. Press-doors

and cabinets were now opened; the mirror was placed on a table; the table was drawn out into the middle of the room, and the Maids of Honour began their work.

"Have you heard what about the Baron?" whispered La Juliers, as she knelt down on the Queen's left, and gathering up in her hand half Her Majesty's behind-hair, began to braid it.

"Yes, has your Majesty heard what?" answered Clémentine from the right, unconsciously bringing the tip of her forefinger to her nose as she spoke. "I mean no impoliteness," added she, hastily, noticing a slight frown on the Queen's forehead. "I mean no impoliteness; I beg for pardon, but the Baron——"

"What is all this about?" said the Queen, looking hastily round to the right, to La Juliers' great discomfiture.

"The Baron has," said La Juliers.

"He has no——," said La Cheveuse.

"It is too shocking to take the entire responsibility of informing your Majesty on one's self," said Louise.

"Could not you divide the sin?" asked the Queen, gravely.

"We might quarter it, perhaps, please your Majesty, and then it would be next to no sin at all," answered she.

"He has no N," whispered Clémentine.

"He has no O," said Louise.

“He has no S,” said Clémentine again, with greater confidence.

“He has no E,” said La Juliers.

“Pardon me, he has no Nose,” said Louise, falling on her knees before the Queen, and hiding the centre of her own face with both hands.

“Is that all?” said the Queen, examining herself carefully in the glass.

“What can Louise mean?” thought the Queen, as she sat down to dinner; and for the first course she thought of nothing else, and preserved an absolute silence, which has never been known to happen since in Hungary.

“I am sorry to hear your Majesty’s new Guardship has lost her bowsprit in the last storm,” said Louise, wishing to break the silence.

“What can she mean?” thought the King to himself, “Hungary has no more sea-ports than Bohemia.”

“May I help your Majesty to some pig’s face?” said the Lord Chamberlain.

“Pardon me, No,” said she, “I will take a little nose.”

And no one knew how, but so it was, that the conversation for the rest of dinner-time ran entirely on the subject of elephants.

It was late at night before Baron Seneff reached the palace. His carriage had broken down on the

road, and several hours were thus lost, to his great annoyance. He consequently determined that he would not present himself to the King that evening, but would wait till next morning to explain the reason of his delay. And so, without calling up any of the Court, he retired quietly to his own room.

Within two hours the King was roused from sleep by the sound of knocking at his door. "How loud the Queen snores to-night," thought he, waking; "I will not disturb her." So he lay still, and softly called out to the unknown visitor to enter. But at this moment the Queen awoke, and they both saw a tall figure take his place at the foot of the bed between the curtains.

"It is I—it is the Baron Seneff," said the unknown, gently; and as he spoke, the moonbeams fell brightly upon his countenance.

"It is his ghost," whispered Her Majesty; "but no matter, the missing member has been mercifully restored to its place after death."

"I have a remarkably good nose," continued the Baron.

"Don't be alarmed," said the King, as his wife shuddered and grasped the bedclothes.

"I have a remarkably sharp nose," repeated the Baron, "and I am convinced that there is fire somewhere in the palace. I beg pardon of your Majesties

for my intrusion, but I thought it right to make you first aware of the danger."

"It is enough," answered the King. "It is not the first service you have rendered me." Then rising, and hastily throwing on a robe, he accompanied the Baron through the empty passages of the palace.

At every step the peculiar odour of fire—an odour which none can forget who have ever known it, increased, till the King was no less aware of its reality than his more acutely-gifted attendant. It appeared to proceed from the apartments of the Maids of Honour, and the King and the Baron knocked loudly at the door. Louise first showed her face. "I smell fire here," said the King. "I cannot perceive it," answered Louise. "Do you?" added she to the Baron, whom she had never seen before, and did not recognize. "As clearly as I should smell garlic in Spain," said he, bowing, with a courteous air.

But at this moment a wreath of smoke found its way from behind through the door, and brought tears into the eyes of Louise. No further doubt could be left on the matter. "Fire! Fire!" she screamed out vigorously. The rest of the Ladies called out in their turn, and directly presented themselves in a state of confusion and disarray, which made it hard for the Baron, even with all his courtesy and all his sense of danger, not to smile outright. Clémentine in particular, whose ancles were not her

strong point, ran out with nothing on but one slipper and the window-blind, which she had torn down in her fright: . . . but it would not be fair for me to tell all about it. The servants were summoned, and, hastening to the Ladies' sitting room, they found the curtains and other hangings in a blaze. The Baron exerted himself first among the foremost, and in an hour all further cause of fear had ceased.

Next morning the Ladies assembled in the breakfast-room to await the entrance of their Majesties. They were all flutter and confusion, and began to talk over what had happened in the most cheerful manner. Every one had a different reason to account for the fire, but no one could settle who the person was to whom their escape was due.

"How lucky it was that she smelt it so soon! She must have had a remarkably fine nose," said Louise.

"Perhaps it was not a she, but a he," remarked La Juliers, thoughtfully; "men are such strange creatures."

"I can tell nothing about it," remarked Clémentine. "I am sure, I was so thoroughly blinded."

"So you certainly were!" shrieked Louise; "but never mind, we will have the window put right to-day."

The only sad face was that of the Lady of the Bedchamber. "I have lost my amber snuff-box, which the esteemed Count, my late husband, gave me

on his death-bed as a token of eternal affection," said she, deplorably. "The servants found it in the room this morning ; but, alas, it is cracked across the bottom."

"Shocking—shocking, indeed!" exclaimed the Maids of Honour together.

"It is a loss which would not fall very heavily on the Baron Seneff, however," said Louise, archly. "I wonder why he has not come."

"Hush, hush," said the Countess, as the King and Queen entered.

"We have one request to make," said the Lady of the Bedchamber immediately, kneeling down before the King: "It is that your Majesty would reward that brave gentleman who saved our lives last night by appointing him General of your Guard."

"We have much reason to implore it," said Louise ; "his good nose saved us all."

"We are sure your Majesty will not be safe with the Baron," said La Juliers.

"If you value the life of an old and attached servant, you will appoint an officer who—who—can smell," said the Lady of the Bedchamber.

"I have much pleasure in granting your wishes," said the King, gravely ; "indeed, they are already granted. The General whom I have appointed, not only, as all the world knows, showed his strength at the battle of Kutumoff, by dividing at one stroke a

ferocious Turk, who had aimed at his face, and cut off thereby the Baron's entire moustache—which he reasonably regarded as an insult—but he has also, last night, by the saving of our lives, given proof that sharp as his sword may be, his nose is still sharper—Usher, call in the General Baron Seneff!”

The children all laughed at the close of Eleanor's story. “Foolish child,” said Mrs. Wentworth, laughing herself: “where did you pick up all that nonsense, child? Whose turn is next?”

“Charley *knows*, I daresay,” cried Eleanor, archly.

“It is mine,” answered he, with an extremely grave and, if I may so say, disheartened countenance. “I wish I had anything funny to tell: but animals never laugh, so far as I know.”

“Our cat laughs, sometimes,” said Lucy. “Do you know, she came to us from Cheshire—I could tell you such a funny story about that.”

“Another time!” said Mrs. Wentworth, as Charles, recovering confidence, began his story.

CHARLES'S FOURTH TALE

THE THREE RAVENS

THERE was a gentleman, whose wife was dead, and who lived with his little daughter Catherine, whom he dearly loved, in the country. Now it so happened that on Catherine's eighth birthday, besides the present of a beautiful copy of "*Robinson Crusoe*," and of a large new writing-desk, which she received from her kind father, a large hamper, directed to herself alone, came to the house. Such a thing had never happened before: and Catherine ran directly to call their servant Richard, and to beg him to open it for her, as it was firmly tied up with thick cord. She danced round him with joy all the while he was at work cutting the fastenings: when suddenly the lid went up of itself, and out jumped a beautiful little spaniel dog, who directly ran up to Catherine, and began licking her hands and frisking about her in the prettiest way that ever was seen. "There's something else, Miss Catherine," said Richard, who did not appear altogether satisfied with the sight of the spaniel. Catherine put her hand carefully into the straw with which the hamper was filled, and presently pulled out something large, and dark, and heavy, which she

did not need any one to tell her was a great plum-cake. "It's all for me—it's all for me!" she cried; and then presently, in a lower voice, "But I shall give you, and Nurse, and Papa a bit." Richard fetched a knife, and cut the cake up: and Catherine gave him a piece, and ran off with the rest to the nursery. But the cake was so large, that after she had given away some to her Papa and Nurse, and to her little spaniel, and had eaten quite as much as was good for herself, more than half was left: and this she took to her own little bedroom and put carefully away within her new desk, which was like some gentlemen's libraries, and pretended to hold much graver things than you really find there.

But Richard, the servant, was a wicked, greedy man, who thought only of pleasing himself, and did not care whether he did so honestly or not. And so, when evening came, he stole quietly upstairs, and hunted about until he found out where the cake was kept: and then he carried it off from Miss Catherine's desk and locked it up in a box in his own room.

The moment Catherine awoke next morning she went to her desk, and she could hardly believe her eyes when she found it empty: not a crumb of the precious cake remaining. Poor child! she fairly burst out crying, and ran down to tell her father what had happened.

Her father was very sorry: he caused a search to

be made in all directions : but nothing was discovered ; and he had no thought of Richard's dishonesty. So Catherine began playing with Ponto—for so she had called her little spaniel—and presently forgot the disappointment of the lost treasure. The luncheon-bell rang, and the servant came into the room to lay the cloth and make things ready. Presently up went Catherine to her Papa with a very long face. " Oh, Papa, Papa," she cried, " what *shall* I do ! Ponto will not play with me any longer. Do call him away from Richard." " Ponto, Ponto !" cried he ; but Ponto liked running between the servant's legs and jumping up at his coat-tails better than anything else ; though Richard's surly " Down, pup !" gave clear proof that he quite agreed with his master on the subject.

Ponto, though quite aware that he ought to obey his master, yet, like many other people, thought he might venture to do what he wished when he had a *good reason* for disobedience. He poked his long, pickpocket muzzle into Richard's coat, and no doubt thought he was making himself very agreeable to his little mistress when, wagging his tail with exquisite good humour, he ran up and dropped at her feet, by way of acceptable present, a large slice of her own—own—her very own plum-cake ! You will all guess how Richard came by it : but the dear little one, suspecting no evil, and thinking it was the piece she had given Richard the day before, ran to carry it back to

him. Her instinct, however (for so we must call it), was less correct than her father's reasoning. For, observing the servant blush and hastily leave the room, the truth at once flashed on his mind. He sent Catherine to the nursery, and calling Richard back, charged him with the theft.

Perceiving that he had no chance of escape, Richard at once confessed what he had done, and begged hard for pardon.

"You must leave my house this day," said his master, firmly. "But as you have not attempted to conceal your dishonesty, by adding falsehood to theft, you shall receive no further punishment. And I hope that I may never need to make known what has happened to any one, in case I hear that in your future life you try to make amends for your sin by true and sincere repentance."

Richard's conscience smote him: he knew this was by no means his first act of theft; and justly suspecting that his master was aware of his dishonesty, he attempted no further excuses, but left the house without delay.

"I am sure that naughty thief should have been well punished," cried one of the little boys, bursting in on Charles's story. "I would not have let him off!"

"But is that all?" said Lucy, imploringly.

"Not quite," replied Charles. "But for my part I think the master did what was both kind and right in

giving his servant a chance to regain his character. For, 'Use every man after his deserts, and who shall 'scape whipping?' And there is nothing that so hardens a man in sin, as the belief that he has sinned past forgiveness. Many poor young things have been turned to bad for life, because they were not kindly and Christianly forgiven for one first wrong thing. And even if the sinner should not after all give proof that he is sorry, I do not think that any one would find cause to repent himself, if, like Richard's master, he has forgiven where he might have gone further in punishment, and allowed charity to have the last word."

But, whilst I am talking, several years are running by in the course of my story, during which Catherine, whom we left a little girl, was growing up out of childhood to be the pride and the delight of her father. Richard, too, seemed to have profited by time, and to have repented of his former conduct. In a village many miles distant from his master's house he had set up a little inn, where he bore a fair character in the eyes of men, and prospered accordingly. And I think that nothing in his whole life gave his master so deep a pleasure as to learn that his kindness towards his servant did not appear to have been altogether thrown away.

Now it happened at last that business called him up to London; and as his road lay that way, he

determined to stop for the night at the Three Ravens, and show Richard that his trust in him was fully restored. So, taking with him as much money as he thought would be required for his business, he, Catherine, and Ponto set out on their journey, and reached the inn towards nightfall. Richard was glad to see his old master, and for a few minutes, I believe, he felt really grateful to him for his kindness. He fetched a bottle of his best wine for their dinner: and whilst it was making ready, he pointed out to Catherine—the inquisitive young creature—the tall elm-tree in front of the house, on which were the nests of the three ravens who had given their name to the inn, and whose likenesses, painted on the signboard, were at that moment swinging and creaking dolefully in the wind, before the entrance.

But when night came on, and his guests had gone to their bedrooms, Richard's old evil thoughts, which he had never truly prayed might be taken from his heart, came back to him. He felt full of anger at the poor spaniel, who had been, so he thought, the only cause of the discovery of his theft; and he was ready to take any way to be avenged on him. Evil thoughts rarely come alone.

"My master never goes up to London without a large sum of money," was the next; "but I can never get at it whilst that dog is in the way."

But then again his conscience, not quite seared, told

him how great a sin this would be ; and he lay tossing on his bed for some hours in uncertainty, till the temptation at last prevailed. But he would only drown the dog—he thought ; as for the money, he would leave that alone,—and so he quieted his conscience. For sin, when a man has once admitted it to his thoughts, and as it were held conversation with it, never lets him rest ; and even if he does not altogether yield, yet it drives a very hard bargain with him.

And so it was with Richard. Quietly he stole from his bed, and quietly he called Ponto from his master's door, outside which he was sleeping. Then taking the dog in his arms, he ran quickly with him down to a pond at the bottom of the garden : and then picking up a large stone, with trembling fingers he tied it round the poor spaniel's neck, and with a single heave flung him into the middle of the water. Down poor old Ponto went with a heavy plunge, which made the wicked servant start for terror. What would he not have given at that moment, not to have done what he had done ? But it was too late. In the dawning light he saw the ripples circle round and round on the surface for a moment, and then all was still as before. Richard felt like a guilty thing before the light ; and yet he saw the light with pleasure, for it put all further temptation away from him. He crept back to his house and waited with impatience till morning should

come, and his master should set forth on his journey. But when morning came, and Catherine and her father made ready to start, Ponto was missing. High and low they hunted; but in vain. At last they thought the dog must have strayed homewards, and they sent Richard, who was glad to be out of their sight, with orders to search the road over which they had travelled the day before. And Catherine's kind father, putting off his journey, promised that he would wait for a day or two to see whether Ponto could not be recovered.

But it was not to be so; and yet it was to be so—though in a way which no one would have thought of.

Richard returned at nightfall, with no news of the dog. Catherine shed many tears; and she and her father went to bed with a strange, sad feeling. And then the temptation to the robbery came over Richard's mind with strength greater than before. He got up, and walked up and down in the garden, trying to gain courage for the crime. At last he came to the edge of the pond; and as he stood looking at it he thought,

“No one will ever discover it. I must finish what I have begun.”

But at this moment a loud clanging sound in the air startled him; and he almost fainted for fear, as, looking round, he saw the three ravens, flying with their dark outspread wings, in a straight line, direct

to the centre of the water. Their keen scent had taught them that there was something there which might be their prey, and round and round they wheeled, loudly cawing, and ever and anon touching the surface with their wings, till the water glittered in the moonlight. Richard's heart sank within him. He flung stones, and tried hard to chase the ravens from the spot, but to no purpose: round and round they still circled, and Richard even fancied that the pebbles he threw were turned aside by some invisible hand, so that they should not touch them. He even was not quite sure that he did not hear something very near him call his name. His eyesight swam: his strength failed him, and he fell fainting by the water's edge.

When morning came again, and the master of the inn was nowhere to be found, every one was in great alarm. Catherine's father and the servants went searching hither and thither; and as the pond was at no great distance from the house, it was not long before they observed something dark lying on the ground by its edge. As their footsteps were heard, Richard awoke from his fainting fit, and stammered out some excuses for the state in which they now found him. I believe he said he had been drinking! What a base coward does sin make of a man, that he should think it the best thing he can do, to say he has been making a beast of himself, and that also a

lie ! But his old master could not but see in his guilty face that there was something wrong yet undiscovered, and he immediately sent for the police officers.

On hearing this, Richard trembled, and loudly denied that he had done *it* ; but the words were scarcely said before he turned pale with fear, for again the loud cry of the ravens was heard in the air above them.

“ Oh, Papa,” screamed Catherine, who was standing by, “ look at those birds ! See how they fly round and round the water ; there must be something beneath it—I am sure there must ! ”

Every one turned to Richard, who sank down on his knees before them, and, scarcely knowing what he said, murmured out his evil deeds and intentions, and did not even dare to ask forgiveness for the crime he had committed.

Catherine and her father, astonished at the wickedness of their fellow-creature, and overcome with grief, were silent. At last, turning to the officers, who had now arrived, with a look of sorrow and anger which none who saw it could ever forget, he signed to them to take the wretched man to prison.

“ Oh, forgive him—forgive him this once ! ” cried Catherine, in tears. A murmur arose in the crowd.

“ No, dear child,” said her father, “ it cannot be so, and it should not be so. It has been so willed, that

sin should, even here, at times meet with punishment. What we have seen to-day may no one present ever forget! It is indeed a sign to warn us all. For this man thought to have concealed his crime, so that none should see it; but God has sent his messengers, and the ravens of the air have shown it."

At the conclusion of Charles's tale, the children were all silent, and some minutes passed before the next speaker began his story.

ARTHUR'S FOURTH TALE

THE YOUNG QUIXOTE

IN a village in Yorkshire, the name of which I cannot precisely remember, was born, some eighteen or twenty years since, a boy named Augustus Talbot. His father was at the time of his birth already an old man, and he came of an old family, to which an old baronet's title belonged. He lived in an old Manor-house; dined at the old hour of One, in company with his old friends drank old wine, and was in all ways a specimen of the good Old English Gentleman, only, unfortunately, not of the olden time. As his young son and heir grew up, what he heard and saw

about him wrought powerfully on his mind; and Augustus, too, became old before his time. He would read for hours the books which he found in the library of the old house—dusty chronicles, *poems in black letter*, and stories on ghosts and witches, till he believed in them as firmly as King James the First himself, and with quite as much reason.

His father, who was a sensible man, with prejudices, was much vexed to see the turn which his son was taking, and he would often talk with him on the subject, and give him good advice, which had as much effect as other parents' good advice generally has on their children.

"How I wish I had been born in the merry days of old England," Augustus would say, "when a gentleman kept open house and hospitality, and dined in state with his tenants and followers about him; when the only partition-wall between the servants'-hall and the dining-hall was the salt-cellar, as we read of in the old chronicles. Then rich were not separated from poor, or poor from rich; and, indeed, with the abundant charity of those days, I hardly see how there could have been poverty."

Such arguments his father could not answer. So he would say, "All that may be true, Augustus; but as for what you were saying about old England, why, time goes on, and if that was old England, this must be older England, so far as I can see."

“Older and worse,” his son would answer. “Many sciences and arts of those times are now utterly lost, and even contemptuously spoken of. Where is the knowledge of the future, which men then possessed? A thousand signs, omens, and auguries then prophesied to them of the good or ill-luck of any business they were engaged in. Rightly did they think that it was most unlikely that man should be left to grope out his way in ignorance of what was about to befall him. They had not such a material view of life as we—I mean, as that which is now popular; and hence the faith placed in those beliefs now held superstitious.”

“That may be all very true,” replied his father, taking up the “British Almanack” to look for the next eclipse, “but I cannot see that men were any better for the knowledge, or that they cleared any difficulties safely in consequence.”

“That is because you have never read the old chronicles,” replied his son.

And in fact Augustus had read these old books to some purpose: for he had grown to believe in all the wonderful stories they told as firmly as ever Fiammetta or Bertha the wonderful stories told them by their nurses. He was in fact his own nurse, and his own infant. While in one way his studies made him an old man, while yet a child; in another way these superstitions, or beliefs unconnected with reason, kept

him in childhood when he should have gained the larger feelings of a man. I can hardly count up the many foolish notions under which he lay. If he saw any one step beneath a ladder, he thought he would be hanged within six weeks. If the candles were left unsnuffed, he directly saw a thief in the wick, and was ready to swear that it was a portrait of one of his father's tenants. If a coal flew out of the fire, he would take it up before it was cold, to see whether it was a coffin or a money-box ; and as it burned his fingers, he was sure it must be the coffin. When he walked out, his eyes were always in the air, to observe the crows and ravens, and see whether they flew on his right hand or his left. When he went out shooting with his father, he could not help missing his shot, he said, if the hares crossed and doubled his path on the unlucky side, and thought the gamekeeper a sceptical wretch for grinning. If a beetle was heard scratching and biting its way in the old woodwork, it was a death-watch. And the greatest wonder of all was, that any of the family yet survived after so many certain proofs of their approaching destruction ; although I never heard that he could explain how this happened.

But the sign in which Augustus had most confidence was the sign derived from sneezing. No other sign, he said, was so ancient ; it had been so long believed in, that he could ask, triumphantly, whether there must not be some truth in it. It was an

authentic universal belief : a real innate idea. The great Dr. Whewell of Cambridge, he had heard on the best authority, would put it into the next edition of his *Philosophy*. But the Doctor, as I have been told, was a great deal too sensible. Augustus did not mind this, but went on with his argument. The Greeks, with their acute minds, believed that sneezing was an Augury. The Romans, with their practical understandings, were certain of it. But these were heathens. The men of the Middle Ages, our forefathers, believed in sneezing—as he read in the old chronicles. No other sign, again, he said, was so trustworthy. Other signs came from things without, as this proceeded from a man's own self. Further, it was heard from the noblest part of a man, as no one, even in these bad days, had ever denied ; it sounded forth from the head itself—nay, from a trumpet which Nature had specially provided, and placed foremost in the very middle of a man's face. Coming whence it did, he did not doubt that a good sneeze was in direct communication and counsel with the brain, the very source and fountain of Reason.

I am afraid that all this was not only foolish in itself, but led other people into folly. As Don Quixote had his Squire, Sancho, who half believed him and half took advantage of him, so it was with Augustus. His chief friends were two boys of his own age, Robert and Edward, whose father's house

was in the immediate neighbourhood. They were not wise enough to answer the learned superstitions of Augustus, and to show him that, for one sign which happened to fall out correctly, fifty were flatly contradicted by facts: they were not good enough to feel that it was a wrong thing to take advantage of such weakness. But they were clever enough to lead him as they chose, by pretending to think as he did. And so they played off many school-boy tricks on him, which, as Sir Augustus Talbot, his father, was richer than theirs, always ended in their coming into possession of his toys, or fruit, or pocket-money. For he could resist no request, if they told him that they had seen something which was a sure sign that he would grant it; and then they would go home, and laugh with their friends at the foolishness of the young Quixote—for so they called Augustus.

Augustus's father had given him a garden of his own, which lay in a farm about ten miles distant from the house. And in this garden was an orchard, containing some very fine peach-trees nailed up against the south wall. Now it so happened, one summer time, when the fruit was ripe, that Augustus determined to go and gather them, and bring them for a present to his mother, who, like everybody else whom I ever met with, had quite a particular fancy for peaches. But Robert and Edward had a particular fancy for peaches too, as it happened: and presently

hearing of this, determined that, come what might, the peaches should be theirs. So, finding that Augustus had ridden over to his garden, and intended to stop for a day or two at the farm-house to see the fruit gathered, they set out, and came to the farm by the evening. Augustus welcomed his friends, and taking them to the storeroom, shewed them the peaches all ready gathered and packed in wool, so that their mouths watered at the sight. "I wish I could give you any," said he, "but I must not, for my mother would be very angry if she heard of it." And then he invited his friends to stop to supper with him; but they were so annoyed at the sight of the peaches which they were not to touch, that they refused to stop, and bidding him good evening, left the farm-house. But, as they went out, Edward said to Robert, "Brother, we shall be a couple of green geese if we do not have a look at the storehouse before we go home." Robert agreed, but added, the difficulty was not to get at the peaches, but to prevent Augustus from finding out who had done it. So they laid their heads together—as the Common Council of the City of London did, when they made the wood pavement—and soon devised the plan which I am about to tell you.

At the dead of night, climbing into the storehouse window by a ladder, the two wicked boys carried off the fruit, and took it safely in baskets to their own

house. Next morning they again presented themselves to Augustus, and found him tearing his hair, and crying out all over the house—"My peaches are stolen—my peaches are stolen!"

"How can that be?" said his pretended friends; "last night we saw them all safe locked up in the store-house."—"They are gone now," replied Augustus. "They are stolen—what shall I say to my mother? And it is all my own fault too; for when I began to gather them, I sneezed three times together; but still I went on gathering, though I might have known what was about to happen. For you know the old chronicles——"

"We are very sorry," said Robert and Edward, interrupting him—"but what shall we do?"

"That's more than I can tell," cried he; "what is the use of friends, if they cannot help me?"—and then he began to scream and call out again after his peaches.

"It must be some tenant of yours," said Edward, gravely. "All we have to do is to find out who the thief is. And if you will take my advice, I think I have a plan which will soon put you on the right track."

"What's that—pray tell us!" said Robert, with an air of great curiosity.

And then Edward proposed a plan, which was much like that I told you of in my last story. He

advised they should call the neighbours together, and should make trial of them, as he said, after the fashion of the Middle Ages. He would give them each a rose to smell of—and then if any one should sneeze, they would feel not the slightest doubt of who the thief was.

“I never knew sneezing to fail,” said Robert, gravely.

“Nor I,” said Augustus.

“Do you agree then?”

“Yes,” answered he. “But there are no roses in my garden, I am afraid. What shall we do?”

“It is no matter,” answered Robert. “I have thought of that already; we will go home and fetch them, and return here by the afternoon, if you will have everybody ready.”

And so the plan was settled. Robert and Edward rode to their house, and gathered a sufficient number of full-bloom roses. They took care to choose them of different colours: and into the darkest coloured one they put a quantity of cayenne pepper—shaking it down carefully between the leaves, so that no one could observe it.

By the time they returned Augustus had gathered together a goodly company of his father's tenants and neighbours, who all fancied that it could be nothing less than dinner to which the young Squire had invited them. But they found themselves sadly mistaken, when Robert, ranging them all in a circle—

in which he and his brother and Augustus also took their places—explained why it was that they had been called together. They tried to look grave ; but do what they could, they could not help thinking that the gentlemen must be either rogues or fools—or perhaps both. Every one, however, cried out that he was innocent of the theft, and said he was quite ready to go through the trial.

And now Robert, taking the roses in his left hand, offered one with his right to each of the company in turn. But he took care to give the dark-coloured one to Augustus : and no sooner did it come near his nose than he sneezed violently. Every one stared with astonishment. “What does it all mean ?” said one. —“ I don’t know, I am sure,” cried Augustus, much frightened. “ I am sure it was not the rose—I am ill—I have a cold, I believe.” So Robert carried the flowers round again, to give every one a second trial. But the second time the unfortunate Augustus sneezed even more violently than before—once—twice—thrice,—there was seemingly no end to it : he positively began to think his nose was coming off, and the tears came running down with the violence of the pepper, till, between the nose and the rose, he was half mad with rage, and confusion, and annoyance. “What does it all mean ?” asked every one. “ It is only that Mr. Talbot has been his own thief, and stolen his own peaches,” cried Robert : and then turning to his

brother, he added, "No honest man likes thieves company—thieves to thieves, if he can find any one here. I daresay you will find all about it in the old chronicles." And he and all the rest of the company took their departure, laughing and jeering at the foolish Augustus—who hardly knew what to believe, between the truth and the omen—and holding up their hands to their noses, with gestures even more expressive and contemptuous than that vulgar method of expressing contempt commonly signifies.

The children sat looking on, as if they expected something more. "Have not you had enough?" said Arthur, laughing,—“or must I tack on a moral to my fable?”

"Where is the good man of your story?" said Lucy Wentworth. "All stories have a good man or a good child in them."

"You must do without him in this case, I am afraid," answered he. "One fool makes many—as the proverb says—and I do not defend Robert and Edward;—they were very naughty children, and I hope they grew better as they grew older; I only wish to show the evil such childish fears may lead to. You must not take me for a thief because I tell you about thieving."

"Except with regard to your last incident," said Mrs. Wentworth. "But I still say of you, as I said

of Eleanor yesterday, when she went to the same Ten Days' Entertainment for her story—that such borrowing is not dishonesty.”

“Now for the next,” said Arthur,—willing to turn the discussion: for no one thinks his debts pleasant conversation.

ANNA'S FOURTH TALE

THE PEASANT COUNTESS

ROSE, the peasant's daughter, was at work in her father's garden. Slowly pacing the walks, she tied up the tall white lilies and the carnations, pulled out and cast away the weeds which the hot summer's sun had raised from the fruitful earth, and gave water to her favourite plants one by one, as evening fell and the high garden hedge cast its lengthening shadow over the flower-beds. And meanwhile ever and anon she lifted up her blue eyes from the work, and cast timid looks over shrub and flower to the lattice gate at the farther end of the long turf walk that led towards the cottage-door. “What is Rose looking for?” thought her father to himself, as, his day's labour among the vines over and done, he sat in the porch, humming over the burden of a pretty popular song of the day—

Marguerite
Qui m'invite
À te conter mes amours,
Dis moi vite,
Ma petite,
Si je dois t'aimer toujours, &c. &c.

and waiting till his daughter should finish her work and come in to make the supper ready. "What is Rose looking for? Oh! I remember—I remember. How could this foolish old head forget it," said he, tapping his forehead with the handle of his pruning-knife. "And 'tis just thirty years this day, too, since I first saw my dear Marguerite. I remember it, for 'tis the last day on which we hear the cuckoo hereabouts.

Marguerite
Qui m'invite, &c.

Well, I suppose I had better leave them together—the young to the young: and he looks a fine noble fellow too:" and so murmuring to himself, the old Pierre rose and went within his cottage to prepare the supper himself, and to lay out the table—for three.

"What is it all about, I daresay you are thinking, children," said Anna. "But if you had been in Pierre's garden a few minutes later—in his garden in the pleasant province of Touraine, the heart and centre of beautiful France—why then perhaps you would understand it. Just as her father's figure had

left the cottage porch, a young man made his appearance (and I am told it was quite by chance that the two things happened together, only then, you know, there is no such thing really as chance) at the wicket-gate I have before mentioned. As he touched his brown felt hat with a respectful air, Rose ran gaily up to unloose the wooden latch. "Edouard," whispered she—though there was no one by but the flowers to hear her—"you come late this evening."

"I had much to do," said he.

"What can *you* have to do?" said Rose; "you—(or *thou*, as I ought to put it, if we would draw the line the French draw between the talk of acquaintances and the talk of friends) "a poor olive-grower's son."

"My most important business is, however, to see you," answered he, smiling. And affectionately taking her hand, they walked up and down the garden-paths together.

They talked at first on many little matters—the heat of the day past and the coolness of the evening, the sweet scent and the beauty of the flowers—and did not seem to find it wearisome.

("I am sure I should, though, to hear it," broke in little Lucy, "so pray leave it all out.")

"Hush! hush," said Mrs. Wentworth, smiling; "you put Anna out."

"Not at all," she cried gaily; "what shall I do?"

"O, go on, and tell us all about it," cried Eleanor.

"I daresay we shall understand it all; I am sure it was very nice for them."

"*Bien*," said Anna; and then in her story-telling voice went on—)

"What flowers are you most fond of?" said Edouard.

"My namesakes, of course," answered Rose; "the fairest to look on, and the sweetest to smell."

"And those which longest keep scent and beauty," said he with a smile.

"Fifty years hence, if we are both spared so long,"—"Fifty years hence, if we are both spared so long, I shall find *my* Rose as fair and as sweet as to-day," cried Edouard, with sparkling eyes. "Oh, Rose, what will your father say?"

"My dear father,—he is so kind and good, that I can hardly bear to think of leaving him," answered Rose. "But yet he says he knows that it must be—that he knows my dear mother, if she were alive, would wish it—if she had known you, Edouard!"

"All is gained then!—all is gained!" cried he; "but how did he learn it?"

"Oh, Edouard, must we part from my father?" was all her answer. "Cannot we still live together? Why must you return to Béziers?"

"So it must be, I fear," said he. "Only, why think more of it before needs must?" Then gaily, as if wishing to change the subject, "Let us return to our

roses, Rose—*revenons à nos moutons*. Ever since I first saw you, I cannot say how much I have loved them !”

“And so it was always, I suppose,” observed Rose, archly. “Let me see. How did the song you wrote for the Flower Games at Toulouse (and did not get the prize) go? Oh, I remember :

O maiden mine—the Rose is red,
The Rose in summer blooming,
When high she lifts her royal head
In purple pride presuming :
We breathe her sweetness from afar :
Her subject flowers revere her :
She shines the garden’s ruby star :
We worship and we fear her.

But O the Lily flower for me
Array’d in maiden whiteness :
Her timid head with dews bespread
And downcast in her brightness :
Her timid head with dews bespread,
The garden’s gentlest daughter ;
Yet queenlike in the maiden robe
That angel fingers wrought her.”

“Ah, never mind ; why remember it ?” said he. “I had only seen the Rose from a distance then, and I have won the prize now : have I not ?”

“It is a curious thing, however,” continued she in her thoughtful way, “what different reasons we value things for. Some plants, I mean, we value for their

use ; some for their colour, like those tulips ; some for their scent, and those most of all."

"Some for all reasons, my little garden philosopher," said Edouard. "I see the lessons of field and garden have not been thrown away on you."

"It is to my mother I owe it all," answered she. "Sometimes as I walk here and look on my flower-beds, I wonder what I should do without flowers. I really do not think I could live without them."

"I at least cannot live without *one*, Rose," said Edouard, smiling. "So let us off to your father and ask his full consent—and let to-morrow, dear, dear Rose, be the wedding-day ; for I am called away on business."

"What business can a poor olive-grower's son have," thought Rose, as without a word, but blushing like her own namesakes, she took Edouard's arm and went within the cottage.

"Oh, my dear father," said Rose, a few hours later, when Edouard had left them for the evening, "I am so happy!—I feel as if it were almost a sin to be so happy, when it is to be parted from you."

"Do not let us talk of it now," answered Pierre. "What were those verses that Edouard sent you the other day, together with the beautiful pot of damask roses? I never saw any such before, they only grow in rich men's gardens."

"I wondered at the time how he came into possession of them," said Rose.

"Did you?" said her father. "Something made him bold, I suppose. But now for the verses. How beautifully he writes!—quite like a real poet:

If the thought, the hope, be rash,
Sweetest, ah forgive it!
Why decline my true love's sign?
Let me give it!

Through the night the thought has fill'd me:
Waking, should I lose it?
Through the day the hope has still'd me:
Why refuse it?

In the hope of pleasing thee
Was my dearest pleasure:
In that thought the trifle brought
Seem'd a treasure.

Though the thought, the hope, be rash,
Sweetest, ah forgive it!
Why decline my true love's sign?
Let me give it!"

The next morning arose bright and cheerful; and now, please, my gentle hearers, suppose the marriage over, the little cottage feast done, and Edouard and Rose, like the Lord of Burleigh and his wife in the beautiful ballad, lightly setting forth on their journey:—

“ I can make no marriage present ;
Little can I give my wife.
Love will make our cottage pleasant,
And I love thee more than life ! ”
They by parks and lodges going
See the lordly castles stand :
Summer woods, about them blowing,
Made a murmur in the land.
From deep thought himself he rouses,
Says to her that loves him well,
“ Let us see these handsome houses,
Where the wealthy nobles dwell. ’

(“ Ah, that is more like a real poet,” whispered Charles.

“ Of course,” whispered Anna.)

And so it was with Rose and Edouard. By beautiful parks and castles—many of them ruined, and more beautiful in their ruin, for those high threatening towers seemed as it were softened into gentleness and childhood by the touch of Time—they took their way—

All he shows her makes him dearer :
Evermore she seems to gaze
On that cottage growing nearer,
Where they twain will spend their days.
O but she will love him truly !
He shall have a cheerful home ;
She will order all things duly,
When beneath his roof they come.

And then, as it was with the Lord of Burleigh, so, as some of you perhaps have already guessed, for I

see it in your eyes, was it with Edouard, Count of La Forte, by the city of Béziers. He led his village bride within the gates of a castle more splendid and



more stately than any they had passed ; the servants welcomed him at the door as servants welcome a master whom they love. He led her on, through

hall and gallery, to a beautiful room, high in a tower that looked out upon the South, over the waters of the blue Mediterranean, and telling her that all she saw was hers, now she was his, he kissed Rose, and comforted her. For her heart sank within her at the sight of the wealth and grandeur around her, and she would have wished herself once more within the little cottage where she had been nursed and bred, had it not been for that greater love she bore her husband.

So she strove against her weakness,
Though at times her spirit sank :
Shaped her heart with woman's meekness,
To all duties of her rank :
And a gentle consort made he ;
And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady,
And the people loved her much.

But with the rank of our new Countess, for such was now her title, followed duties and trials which Rose, in her country ignorance, had little thought of. After some few months, a messenger from the King came, and Edouard was called away to serve in the wars, for he was a brave and a skilful soldier, and, like Othello, "he had done the State some service, and they knew it." And, like the gentle Desdemona, Rose would fain have gone with her husband to Germany: but so it was not to be, for on the very day on which Edouard had to leave his home, his

dear wife brought a lovely child into the world, whose first cry he had just time to hear before his departure. "Please God," said he, "Rose, in a few months at furthest I shall be with you again; and who knows but my son may have a General or a Marshal of France for his papa by that time."

"If it pleases God that you return safe, Edouard, it will be enough," said she.

"If France is safe, and you are safe, it will indeed, Rose," answered he, softly; "only, only, take care of yourself, dearest!" and with these words he left her, for they heard the trumpet blowing in the courtyard beneath them.

As Edouard rode on his way northwards, he comforted himself with the thought that at any rate his wife was in charge of good hands, for he had left her to the care of her own dear father—who had parted with his cottage in Touraine, and taken up his dwelling in his son-in-law's castle; and of his own faithful old nurse Fanchette—who had taken care of Edouard from his childhood, with all the love of a mother; for his own mother, who had lost her life in giving him his, he never remembered.

Now, whether it was from natural weakness, or from grief and anxiety on her husband's account, or lastly, from the feeling that she, who had been born a peasant's daughter, was now left in charge of a Count's castle and his dependants, and that in time

of war and trouble, within a week after Edouard had left her,—but Rose's strength began to fail, and in a few hours she was brought into a state of much danger. Fanchette, her father, and the physician were in the utmost fear, but everything that love could plan, or skill perform, they did, and God's blessing was on their endeavours. The Countess's illness seemed to take a sudden turn, and in a few months, as Edouard said, the war was brought to a happy close for France, and that mainly by the Count's skill in battle. And so when peace was made he returned to his home, rejoicing. Rose and Edouard had, as you will fancy, much to tell each other. For he had to speak—

Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach—

Then of—

The neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum : the ear-piercing fife,
The Royal Banner : and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war :

nor had he less to say of the happy end of it, and of the firm and blessed peace for both France and Germany, which, partly through his own bravery and moderation, had been brought about between them.

Rose thought when she had heard all this, that she had little indeed to tell in return. But that little

seemed much to Edouard, for his great love. And so she had to speak of all matters relating to her sickness and her recovery, which, in truth, she had almost forgotten, for she had but little memory for pain that she had herself suffered.

"And so you were in great danger at one time, Rose?" said he; "I am thankful that I did not know it, and yet, that you should be in great danger, and I not know it . . . !"

"I was, indeed, so they said," answered Rose. "My strength' had failed me, and I had scarcely power left to speak or think, or even to wish anything. One evening, the ninth after you had gone, Edouard, it was, as I lay so, I thought the last had come, my heart so sank within me. And yet I thought, as it were in a dream, that oh, if any one would lay a rose near me, and I could smell it, that it would revive me. Was it not a strange thought?"

"Yes," said he, "but why did you not ask for it?"

"Chiefly because I *could* not," answered his wife, smiling, "my dear Edouard! And then the physician had told Fanchette the day before to take all the flowers from my room; I heard him say so. He thought, I believe, that the scent would make the air heavy and unwholesome."

"So I have heard say; but what did you, Rose darling?"

“Nothing, dear Edouard; I could indeed do nothing. But my dear father, who was standing by watching me—I know not what it was that made him know the thing I wished for, unless it was put into his mind from above—but, something seemed to strike him, and he suddenly left the room. And I was falling, I believe, into an utter fit of ignorance and fainting, when in a moment he returned, with his hands full of the beautiful Damascus roses that grow, you know, around the courtyard. And when he held them to me, I felt that I drew a deep breath, and the life seemed to return to me. But do not look so wildly, my dear Edouard,” said Rose; “you know I began to recover at once, and it is all over now.”

“It is, thank God—and yet it is not,” answered he; “it seems all so hazy before me.”

“Well, indeed it was like a dream to me, Edouard; and I suppose I really fell asleep and was dreaming. For I thought I was again in my father’s garden, and that it was the evening before our marriage, and that you were standing by me, and that you gathered a rose that grew by, and said, ‘Let me give it, Rose; let me give it.’ And when I took the flower, the smell of it, I thought, was sweeter than that of any rose I knew before; and it seemed to grow in my hands, and presently its breath began to come and go, and it was no longer a flower, but my dear baby that lay in my arms, and clasped my hair in its little

fingers, and smiled on me. And you said, 'It is a flower still, dear Rose, and the sweetest I have ever seen.' Was it not strange, Edouard," concluded she, "very strange? But, after all, it was but a dream."

"And when you woke, dear Rose?"

"When I woke, my strength had returned to me, so refreshing had my sleep been. And was this not pleasant too? for I found they had put the little one in my arms, and it had grasped my hair in its fingers, as it was in the dream. And it smiled on me, and looked at me with its strange, wild eyes, exactly as if it knew of the danger I had passed through, and would speak and tell me of it, and could not."

"Ah, dearest, dearest Rose," said Edouard, pressing her hand, "and if we all our life dream such dreams, we shall not, I think, regret it."

"Is that all?" asked the children, when Anna ended her tale.

"Why, what more would you wish for?" said she.

"Something more of a story," answered Lucy. "Why, I thought Rose would dress herself like a little foot-page, and go after her husband to the wars, at least."

"As you read of in the old Scotch ballad, I suppose," said Arthur. "Well, I am well satisfied with Anna's performance. We have had adventures enough elsewhere, and may perhaps afford a little poem for

once. I was afraid, for my part, you were only going to give us Tennyson's "Lord of Burleigh" in *prose*, which would not have been an improvement, although I won't say that Edouard's own verses might not have gained by it."

"Not quite ; I leave such appropriation to Emily," replied Anna, laughing.

"Well, don't reveal the secrets of the trade," said Emily, smiling in her turn, as she took her place and began her story.

EMILY'S FOURTH TALE

SULEYMAN AND THE CALENDARS

THERE was a rich man in the city of Cairo, and he had lands, and houses, and horses, and slaves in possession ; and after he had enjoyed them temperately and with wisdom for a while, he departed from this life, leaving one young son, whose name was Suleyman. And when Suleyman grew up, he ate and drank, and delighted his soul with song and music ; and he gave gifts, and he borrowed money, until at last all the wealth that his father had left him was vanished and gone. And he became so poor that he worked with the labourers who stand waiting for hire in the market-place. Thus he spent several years ; and one day, as he sat beneath a wall, waiting to see

who would hire him, it so happened that a man, a Calendar, of a fair countenance and goodly apparel, drew near and saluted him. So the youth said to him, "Hast thou known me before?"

The man answered him, "I have not known thee at all, O my son; but I see the marks of wealth upon thee, even in this thy poverty."

Suleyman replied, "What was written and decreed has come to pass. But has my father any labour wherein to employ me?"

And the Calendar answered, "I have with me ten princes in one house, and we have no one who should serve us. But if thou wilt come, thou shalt receive from us food and clothing, what shall suffice thee; and thou shalt also receive from us thy portion of wealth and of charity. And perhaps thou wilt in time, by our means, be restored to thy former state and live the life of the wealthy."

Then Suleyman said, "I hear and obey."

"But there is one command that I have to lay on thee," concluded the man. "Thou shalt keep our secret with respect to the things that thou shalt see done of us; and when thou shalt see us weep, ask not the cause of our weeping." And the young man replied, "Well, O father," and he went with him.

Now when Suleyman had been led to the bath, and had bathed himself, and had clad himself in a new garment, he entered the dwelling place of the

Calendars. And when he came in, he found it to be a high mansion, built of fair stone, with chambers and with halls facing each other : and in each hall was a fountain of water, and birds were singing over it ; and the windows, that were set on each of the four sides, looked over a beautiful garden which lay within the court of the palace. The Calendar led him into one of the chambers, and he found it adorned with coloured marble, and the ceiling was dyed with gold and azure ; and it was spread with carpets of silk : and he saw sitting within ten other Calendars, face to face, wearing the garments of mourning, weeping, and wailing. So Suleyman wondered at their case, and would fain have questioned the one who brought him thither, but he remembered the command, and withheld his tongue from words.

Then the Calendar gave to the young man a chest filled with gold, and said that he should spend out of the chest upon them and upon himself according to what was just, and be faithful, and take care of what was trusted to him. And Suleyman replied, “ I hear and obey.”

And thus many days went by ; after which it came to pass that one of the Calendars died, and the rest took him and wrapped him up, and buried him in a garden behind the palace. And death ceased not to take one of them after another until there remained only the Calendar who had hired Suleyman : so he

remained with him in that home, and there was no other with them; and they dwelt there for many years. Then the Calendar fell sick; and when Suleyman saw it he was sad, and he said to him, "O father, I have served you for twelve years, and all that while have I done faithfully by you, according to my power and ability." The Calendar replied, "It is so, my son. Thou hast served me until these men have been taken to God: and we too must die." And Suleyman said, "O my master, the illness is heavy upon thee, and thy strength faileth thee; now therefore I desire of thee one thing—that thou wouldest teach me what has been the cause of the weeping, and why for all this time thou hast mourned and sorrowed together with those men that were with thee."

But he replied, "O my son, handle not what concerns thee not; and ask me not to do what I cannot do, for I have prayed that I should not afflict any one with my affliction. Now, if thou desirest to be saved from that into which we have fallen, open not that door," (and he pointed to it with his hand, and warned him against it); "and if thou desirest that what hath befallen us should befall thee, open it, and thou wilt know the cause of what thou hast seen in us when we sat and were sad; but if thou doest so, thou wilt repent when repentance will not avail thee."

Then the illness increased upon the Calendar, and he died; and the young man with his own hand

wrapped him up, and laid him in the garden of that house by his companions.

Now Suleyman abode still in that place, and no one took anything of it from him—neither the house nor anything that was in it. But nevertheless, his mind rested not, but was moved when he bethought him of the Calendars, and how they sat and were sad continually. And while he thought over the words of the Calendar, and how he had counselled him that he should not open the door, lifting up his eyes, he gazed upon it, for it was in the upper gallery of that chamber. And it was lofty, and of fair proportions; and over it was spread the work of a skilful jeweller. And from it there came forth an odour, and it was sweeter than that of the roses of Iran. And when he smelled it, he said, “Surely this is the gate of heaven.” And upon it were four locks of steel, and over these the spider had woven her webs; and when he saw this, he remembered the counsel that he had received of the Calendar, and he turned his eyes aside, and went his way.

And thus did Suleyman every day. And the odour lay upon his soul, and he said within himself, “Surely behind this door are the roses of heaven.” And so his soul desired him to open the door; but he held it back during a time of thrice seven days, but on the last day the sweet odour overcame his soul, and he said, “I will turn the key, and

the door shall move upon its hinges, but what shall follow Allah knoweth, for all things happen after His will."

Accordingly he arose and turned the key, and the door moved of itself upon its hinges: and when it was opened, he saw a narrow passage, along which he walked for the space of three hours: and he came forth upon the bank of a great river. And on either side of the river grew many roses: and they were tall, and fair to look upon: but when he smelled them, behold, their odour had gone from them. At this Suleyman wondered: and he walked along the bank looking to the right hand and to the left: and as he looked, a great eagle came down from the sky, and taking him up with its feet, it flew with him between heaven and earth, until it bore him to an island in the midst of the sea, and it cast him down there, and departed from him.

So Suleyman sat there, and knew not whither he should go, for his mind was troubled. But one day, lo! the sail of a vessel rose upon the sea-shore before him as a star in the sky; and hope was born in his heart, and he looked at it continually, until it came near to him. And when it came near, he beheld a ship of ivory and ebony, and the sails were of silk, and the oars were of sandal-wood. And in it there were ten maidens, fair as the moon: and when the maidens saw him, they landed to him from the ship, and kissed

his hands, and said to him, "Thou art the king, the bridegroom." Then one of them placed on his head a crown, set with precious jewels, and she clothed him in a royal robe. And the maidens carried him to the ship, and he found in it carpets of silk of many colours. Then they spread the sails, and went over the sea of seas.

Suleyman knew not whither his course was ; but when they came in sight of land, he beheld it covered with armed men, clad in coats of mail. They brought him forward five horses, with saddles of gold, set with all manner of precious stones : and he chose a horse from amongst them, and mounted him. And when he mounted, the flags and banners were set up over his head, and the drums and cymbals were beaten, and the armed men ranged themselves in two armies, to the right hand and to the left. And presently he came in sight of a fair meadow, in which were palaces built of white stone, and gardens, and trees, and rivers, and flowers : and their scent was as the scent of Paradise. And another army came forth to meet him from the palaces and gardens, like the stream when it pours down from the mountains : and when they drew near to him they parted ; and a king came from among them, riding alone, but his face was veiled, so that Suleyman saw it not. And when the king was near to Suleyman, he alighted from off his horse : and Suleyman alighted also, and they

saluted each other with words of welcome. Then they mounted their horses again; and the King said to Suleyman, "Go with us, for thou art my guest." So they went together, and the armies went before them, until they reached the palace. And they alighted, and entered the palace; and Suleyman's hand was in the King's hand: and he led him to a throne, and seated himself there by him. And when the king took the veil from his face, lo! it was a fair damsel, like the shining sun in the clear sky, and a lady of beauty and of wisdom, that sat there by Suleyman. And when Suleyman saw her, he loved her, and he spoke to her, and said, "O lady, am I thy lord and thy husband?"

And she said to him, "Know, O young man, that I am she of Sheba, and that my wisdom is great, and known among the sons of men. And if thou wilt speak to me one riddle, and I answer it not, thou shalt be my lord and my husband: but if not, thou shalt die."

Now when Suleyman looked on the maiden, he loved her greatly; and he thought a while within himself, and then he said:

"What is redder than the rose, and whiter than the lily, and sweeter than the violet?"

But when the Queen heard these words, she was troubled; and she cast down her eyes, and she blushed exceedingly; whereat the lords and those

that stood by wondered greatly. And at last she lifted up her eyes and looked on Suleyman, and said, "Of a truth, O King, I know not."

And Suleyman answered: "Thou, O Queen, art redder than the rose, and whiter than the lily, and sweeter than the violet; now, therefore, thou art my Queen, for I love thee." And therefore he arose and would have kissed the ground before her; but she forbade him; and he replied: "O my mistress, I am less than the servants who serve thee."

Then said she to him: "Seest thou not those servants, and soldiers, and wealth, and treasures, and precious stones?"

He answered her, "Yes."

And she said to him, "All these are thine, for I am thine, and mine are thine; and thou shalt use them and give them as it seemeth fit to thee." Then she lifted up her hand and pointed to a closed door that was by in the chamber, and said to him,

"All these things are thine; but this door thou shalt not open, for if thou open it thou wilt repent when repentance shall not avail thee."

And her words were not ended when the Kadee with the witnesses entered; and all of them were old women, with their hair spreading over their shoulders, and they were great and noble to look upon; and when they came before the Queen she bade them perform the ceremony of the marriage. And so they

married her to Suleyman, and the feast was spread ; and when they had eaten and drank, he took her as his wife, and he lived with her seven years ; and the seven years went by as one day, so great was his joy and his happiness.

But one day he came near to the door, and lo ! a scent as of the lilies of Paradise came from it ; and the odour entered his soul, and he said, " Within it are treasures greater than what I have seen, else would not the Queen have forbidden me to open it. But if not, Allah knoweth." And he arose and opened the door, and the door turned upon its hinges. And lo ! within was the Bird that had carried him from the shore of the great river and borne him to the island ; and when the Bird beheld him, it said to him, " No welcome to a face that will never be happy !" So when he saw it and heard its words, he fled from it ; but it went after him and carried him off, and flew with him between heaven and earth for the space of one hour, and left him in the place from which it had carried him away, and he saw it no more.

The young man, Suleyman, sat therefore in that place, and he thought of all that he had seen, and of his wealth, and honour, and pleasures when he was with the fair Queen ; and when he thought thereon he wailed and wept. And he wandered upon the shore of the great river whither the Bird had borne him for the space of two months, wishing that he

might return to his wife ; and he smelled the lilies and the roses that grew on the bank, but their scent had departed from them. And while he was one night awake, weeping and wailing, a speaker spoke (and he heard his voice, but saw not his face), calling out, "How great were his delights ! Far, far from thee is the return of what is past ! And how many therefore will be the sighs !" When the young man heard it, he knew within himself that he should never see the Queen again, nor go back to the happiness in which he had been living. So he returned to the palace where the Calendars had dwelt ; and he knew, that what had happened to him, was that which had happened to them also : and that this was the reason why they mourned and wept ; wherefore he wondered at it no more, and he excused them for it. And grief and sorrow came upon Suleyman, and he entered the chamber where they had sat, and he sat down therein, and he neither smiled nor spoke more, but the faces of them who had sat there were with him continually ; and so he wept and mourned until he died ; and they buried him by the side of the Calendars.

Emily's tale seemed to satisfy the elders ; only the little ones complained, that as it was the last on that day, they should have had something cheerful to finish with.

"I could not help it," said Emily. "It was my turn to be last this time. Is it not a curious thing," added she to Mrs. Wentworth, "that so many stories should include the incident of the Closed Door?"

"It is, however, equally curious that it should be generally a lady who opens it," said Arthur.

"Curiosity has been supposed our inheritance since the days of Eve," answered Mrs. Wentworth, smiling, "especially as most stories are written by men. But Emily has this time taken her revenge on you."

"It is not due to me," replied Emily. "If you look in Lane's Arabian Anecdotes, you will find my original. And, to put my confessions together, for Cerisa I was greatly indebted to Grimm's admirable German collection."

"It is you then, Emily, who are the Thief in the Family," whispered the little Lucy, climbing up on her knee.

"I am quite content to be so," answered she, quietly, "while it is so much to your advantage. Indeed, I give notice that any one who has the courage to hunt through those three little German volumes may probably find there what I have to tell to-morrow."

"We cannot complain that Emily does not put us on the right—on the right track," said Mrs. Wentworth, rising, and leading the party forth into the

garden. During the course of the afternoon the heavy summer clouds, which had so long darkened the sky, had cleared up, and the sun now shone forth in all his glory. The fresh scent of the dewy grass greeted the children, as they ran up and down the gravelled paths. The last notes of the cuckoo were heard from the grove, the bees flew from plant to plant, and the flowers lifted up their heads to the happy sunlight, and, as if in gratitude to the now smiling sky, put on their fairest colours, and poured out on the air the treasure of their re-awakened odours.

END OF THE FOURTH DAY

FIFTH DAY

To the sweet our sweets reveal them ;
Gentle hearts alone can feel them.

"LOOK at that naughty sun," cried Lucy Wentworth in a melancholy tone, as she took her place in the drawing-room with the rest of the party. "It will be our last afternoon, I suppose. How I wish there were ten senses instead of five !"

"Indeed?" said Arthur. "I however certainly wish there were some other which we could exchange for our remaining subject."

"What is that?" asked Mrs. Wentworth. "Oh! Feeling, I suppose. But I hardly see why you should find it the hardest to deal with."

"It differs in so many ways from the others," said Arthur.

"It is more vague," said Charles.

"It is not in the head, as the rest are," said Eleanor.

"And so it is a kind of blind sense," continued Arthur, "which may be said in some way to include



VIOLA

the others in itself. If we did not feel, we should not see, or hear. It is the foundation—the first condition, so to speak, of the rest.”

“It is the common sense,” said Lucy, putting out an inquiring look, half fear, half pleasure.

“Well done, Lucy! but no more puns to-day, if you are really sorry it is the last,” replied Arthur, with an encouraging smile, “or you will hurt our——”

“Sh, Sh,” said Mrs. Wentworth. “Who begins to-day?”

“It is I,” replied Anna, taking her place at the rosewood table.

ANNA'S FIFTH TALE

THE MODERN MIDAS

I OFTEN wish that I was not a girl——(and here so great a burst of laughter and exclamation arose from the little ladies and gentlemen—Anna's audience—that for a while she could not go on with a word of her story.) I do not mean anything absurd, I believe, (she said at last,) but when I look at the great works of the ancient writers, and read what is said about them in English books, I often wish I had received, or was fitted to receive, such instruction as might have made it possible for me to know them better.

Perhaps you will still think it a foolish wish—but last night, when our story-telling was over, I sat reading tale after tale of wonder in the Mythological Dictionary, and this it was which made me say what I have just said. For I could not but wish to place myself face to face, as it were, with those great men and heroes, and all the inhabitants of the fabled Olympus—casting aside the cloudy air of a feeble translation, as I read of Troy and its nine years' war; and of Ulysses and his world-wide wanderings: or, again, of Tantalus, and the water that fled his lips, and the fruit trees that bent themselves up from his grasp, whilst he suffered the pains of immortal thirst and immortal hunger; or of Midas, that king to whom it was granted that all he touched should be changed into the purest gold, until a universe of gold lay around him, and he perished from the curse of a seeming blessing—and as I read, children, sleep came over me, and a dream, such as I shall now tell you of, presented itself.

Methought I really was a girl no longer, but a spirit, wandering up and down in a desert place, without knowledge of whence I had come, or whither I was going, for when I tried to think on these things, a mist seemed to arise before my mind. And as I walked, I looked down, and I saw that the earth around me was as of hard iron; and as I gazed upwards on the sky, the sky too appeared as an iron

arch above me. And I thought, "Was it always so? Was I not once in a fertile land, filled with trees and flowers, and running water, and with cloud and sunshine above me?" But this must have been when I was a child, I thought, for I can recall nothing of it clearly. And then again I looked, and lo! before me lay a fair land, such as that I remembered of old, and I hastened my steps that I might reach it. But still, as I went onwards, the land seemed to flee before me, and everything was iron around, and I saw that it was the touch of my own feet that seemed so to change it.

And presently I saw beside me a form, as of a fair queen: old in years, but of a calm and lovely countenance. And she said, "Why dost thou walk thus in sadness?" And I answered, "Because I know not whence I am, nor whither I go, nor wherefore I am here. And my own steps also terrify me, for thou seest that at the touch of my feet all things change their former nature."

"Trouble not thyself with vain questions," said the Queen, "let the evil of the day suffice thee! I, too, am journeying over this desert, and I am sent to lead thee to another land, where thou art appointed to be King, and to reign; for in this desert there is no living soul."

But I said, "How can that be? for thou art a stranger to me."

And she answered, "Remember the days of thy childhood. When thou wert young I was with thee, for I was as thine elder sister; and I was by thy cradle, though thou hast forgotten me."

And furthermore the Queen said:

"I am she that cries without, and that utters her voice in the streets. I am more precious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto me."

And when I looked on her I said, "It is so as thou sayest. But give me a sign, that I may know truly whether thou art indeed as my sister?" And she answered, "Where thou art, all things become iron; but where I am, all things become gold. By this sign thou mayest know that I am of thy kindred and thy father's house."

And it came to pass, that as we walked together, the desert went from before my eyes, and lo! I was below the earth, among the nation of the Dwarfs who live in the hollows of the rocks, and make their home among the clefts of the mountains. And the Dwarfs came to me, and said, "Be thou our King." And when I said, "Why should it be so?" they answered, "Because the Queen wills it." And I asked, "What is her name? and where does she dwell?"

And they said that her name was known to none; but it was a name of power: and that she dwelt in a

golden palace in the farthest caverns of the rocks where none could see her. And I said, "Be it done as ye desire."

Now the Dwarfs are placed in the caves of the earth that they may labour at the mines that are there, and may set all things that are below the ground in order, and that they may there increase and multiply; for so it has been enjoined them. And they have fields and meadows, and rivers of water: also the sun and moon give them light. And they came to me and said, "O King, a command has gone forth that we should prepare and build a palace, wherein the King should make his dwelling-place. But we have no tools wherewith to build it. Now, therefore, touch with thine hands the rocks, that they may become iron, and that thou mayest thence fashion us tools that we may hew the stones for the palace, and thou shalt dwell in it, for thou art our King."

And I said, "Be it so, as ye desire it." And the Dwarfs gathered themselves together about me; and when I touched the rocks they became as iron, and I made them tools wherewith they should work the work that was appointed them. And they made tools likewise, and they hewed out stones, and as I taught them, so they laid the stones in order until the foundations were now ready.

But many of the Dwarfs came to me and said, "Give us food, for we perish with hunger!" And I sowed

them seed ; but when it came up, lo ! the grains it bore were of iron ; and they murmured at me. But I said, "Take ye the seed and sow it, and reap and thresh it ! for I will give you tools wherewith ye may dig the ground." And I did so ; and they ceased from their murmuring.

And they said to me, "We too have one that serves us, and if thou wilt she shall serve thee likewise." And they brought unto me a fair maiden ; and she laboured for me, and cunning was in her hand, and she wrought at the palace. But yet she listened not to my words, nor did the things that I commanded. And I said, "If thou wilt live with me, I will teach thee many things, and thou shalt be my Queen," for I loved her. But she said, "Not yet, my Lord, for these things may be as they may be ; and what shall happen, who can tell ?" But yet I loved her for her skill, and she was friendly to me. But the work prospered not as it had prospered before ; nor was there any end to the toil and to the labour.

And again it came to pass that other Dwarfs wearied of the work ; and they went to those that were kings of old time among them, and said, "Come, and let us drive out the new King that is among us, for we labour under him, and our lives are a weariness to us." And further they said, that I had changed the customs and manners which their father had given them, and commanded them to build me a palace such as

none had seen before, and that when it was built I should live in it and be their King : and that I should take away the kingdom from those who had ruled them of old time, and make them my hired servants.

And when the Kings heard this, they were wrathful against me, and they gathered together their armies and came forth to meet me. And I gathered together my army—even those whom I had fed—and I went forth to meet them. And also the maiden whom I loved said, “Shall I go with thee?” And I said, “Abide where thou art, for thy place is not among the fighting-men.” And when I saw the Kings they seemed to me as Dwarfs—even as Dwarfs among the other Dwarfs.

And before the battle began, I lifted up my voice and cried,—

“In the name of the great Queen, hear me ! For I come not to take away your power and authority ; and if any say so, they speak falsely. For my gifts—the gifts of my hands—are they not for all alike ? Nor is there any that labour under me that shall fail of their due reward. For such are the laws of my kingdom.”

But the Kings believed me not. And they spoke to their counsellor, even to the Giant, and said, “Shall we go out to fight, or shall we not ?”

Now this counsellor was an aged man, and of stature as the stature of the giants. And whilst the

morning lasted, and the sun was high, I saw him not, but as the sun went down, I saw him; and he was tall, and dark of colour. And his shadow fell upon my armies, upon the soldiers that were with me; and they trembled, and said, "Help us, O King, for the shadow of the enemy, and winter, is upon us." But when I stretched forth my hands, lo! I stretched them forth in vain, for over shadows I had no power. Then I said, "Let us shelter ourselves within the palace: for the fight is not the fight of swords, nor of the strength that wields them." And they went within the palace, even mine army, and I closed the doors behind them: and as I closed them, lo! the walls became as of iron, firmly knit and wrought together. Then came those Kings and fought against the palace, and prevailed not, for it was as a palace of adamant.

But I went within the palace, to the farthest room, and there kneeling down, I prayed to the great Queen, and I said, "Grant me skill and power that I may make all things golden before the enemy, even as thou doest, and may turn their hearts;" for I thought that when they saw the gold their hearts would turn and I should prevail over them.

But a voice answered and said (but the speaker, even the Queen, I saw not):—

"Though thou knowest all things, and art skilful, yet shalt not thou prevail.

“And though I be wise in all things, and heavenly, yet shall not I prevail.

“Thou shalt not prevail over them with iron ; for man cannot live thereby.

“And thou shalt not prevail over them with gold ; for it is not the gold of this earth, and they know not its value.

“Nor can I give thee aid until thou shalt put from thy mind her whom thou lovest, and shalt seek out the fair maiden who dwells in the innermost part of the earth, and orders all things, and has the Crystal of Wonder : and shalt persuade her to love thee, and join herself to thee, and be thy Queen.”

And I asked again,

“Give me a sign. that I may know where she dwells, for I know it not.”

And the Queen answered,

“The hammer falls on the anvil, and such is the music of the heavens.”

Now it came to pass when I heard this, that I went forth from the palace, and I took my way through waste places to the centre of the earth. And so it was in the dream : for a thousand years went by, and my path was through a winding way or a labyrinth, so that I saw not whence I came, nor whither I went ; and my feet were torn with the thorns, and my flesh was consumed with hunger. Moreover, my old power had well-nigh gone from me.

And when I had now fulfilled my journeyings I entered a cave, wherein stood one in the likeness of a smith, and he struck on an anvil with the hammer, and he forged thence wonderful things that were around him. And about him lay seas, and rivers, and mountains, and trees, and flowers, and grass of the field, and the living creatures that dwell among them : and they were the work of his hands. And as he struck with the hammer, lo ! there came forth music, and it was of sweetness such as is not heard on earth : and as I listened, my strength forsook me, and I fell on the ground, for the pain of that pleasure.

And when I came to myself, behold ! a fair maiden stood by me : and when I saw her, lo ! the countenance of that other one departed from me, that I remembered her no more.

And she said, " Fear not, for I know thee who thou art. Was I not by thee when thou wast born, and cared for thee, and taught thee many things ? "

And I said, " Art thou she of whom the Queen has spoken to me ? "

And thereupon she said, " I will give thee a sign, that thou mayest know me, whom I am. "

And the maiden stretched forth her hand, and in it was a precious stone, clear as crystal. And when I placed it before my eyes, and looked, lo ! I beheld the earth, and all that was thereupon : nor needed I

to turn my eyes hither and thither, for all things I saw together, and as it were at one glance. Also I saw the labyrinth through which I had passed ; and it lay straight and open before me. And again, I saw the Dwarfs—even those amongst whom I had dwelt—and behold ! there was no more war amongst them, but they dwelt peaceably, each in his own habitation : and the maiden had departed from among them, that I saw her not.

Then said I to the maiden that was by me, “Thou art she whom the Queen bade me that I should seek for.” But she answered, “I am poor and simple ; nor have I aught, but only this crystal. I will not therefore go with thee, but wait a while, until the times shall come and my wealth shall return to me—even the worlds and all that is in them.”

Then I said, “I hunger and thirst, and lo ! all things are iron around me—nor does my might and my skill profit me aught. But when shall these things be whereof thou speakest ?”

And she answered,—

“The Whole is scattered in its Parts ; nor do the Parts make up the Whole. But when the Whole shall be returned unto itself, then shall these things be. For there are Four on earth—the Queen, whom thou sawest on thy journeyings, and whose dwelling is in the Golden Palace ; and He that wrought in the cavern ; and thou too art one of us. But we are held

asunder from each other : wait thou therefore, for art thou not the youngest one ? ”

And furthermore she said,

“ Lift up thine eyes, and tell me what thou seest.”

And I said,

“ I see a palace chamber : and on the wall thereof I see words written—even these : ‘ Art loved Chance ; but Law is the path of wisdom.’ ”

“ But what is the interpretation thereof ? ”

And she answered,

“ The words are dark, and their meaning is hidden away from thee. But wait till those things be whereof I have spoken to thee. And then shalt thou know the meaning of the words : but if I taught thee in them now, thou wouldest not profit thereby, for their interpretation is not for Time, but for Eternity.”

“ What strange dreams you dear children have,” said Mrs. Wentworth ; “ I suppose it is something in the air of Miss Cobham’s house, is it not, that breeds them ? ”

“ Say rather, the air of the holidays,” replied Anna. “ But as there is ‘ no law to judge of the lawless, or canon by which a dream may be criticised,’ I must beg for a gentle sentence.”

“ But how could you go in a dream into the middle

of the earth, the very middle?" asked Lucy. "I suppose you never were there? What a strange place it must be."

"I fancy we must not ask for explanations of the circumstances of the story, any more than the meaning of the riddle," said Arthur. "I thought as I heard you, I caught hints and touches of something beyond: of something that is or might be,

That touches me with mystic gleams
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams.
Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where,
Such as no language may declare—

as the great poet says."

"It was not perhaps exactly of this world, the downright geographical earth, that I was thinking," replied Anna, hesitating.

"You must not put her upon interpretation," observed Mrs. Wentworth. "A true allegory, such as I take it Anna means hers to be, is not something which you can, so to speak, translate into a direct prose meaning, and find for every particular an exact and literal equivalent. It must not be a tale which requires a mere change of names to transfer it from fiction to fact. Rather it is something which is at once the reality and the semblance; and which leaves on the mind an impression all the more strong because it is an indirect and enigmatic teaching."

"Like Parrhasius' picture in my Mythological Dictionary, I suppose," said Anna.

"What was that?" asked the little ones, ever ready to smuggle in a tale extraordinary, and as it were to heap up pleasure with pleasure.

"Is Eleanor ready?" replied she. "No, not quite, as usual! Well then:

"Parrhasius was a Greek painter; and he and Apelles, another Greek painter, disputed as to which of the two was the better artist. Apelles painted some grapes, so naturally, that the birds flew in and pecked at them.

"What have you to show me now?' said he to Parrhasius, with an air of triumph.

"Oh! nothing, nothing,' said he; 'but there is my picture, such as it is,' pointing to the wall opposite.

"There!—but where?' replied Apelles. 'Oh! I see: draw the curtain, Parrhasius, and let me see it.'

"The curtain is the picture,' said Parrhasius; and so they shook hands and parted."

"Now draw up your curtain, Eleanor," said Charles. "we are ready."

"You have almost put my ideas to flight, with your fine old classical story," replied she, taking her place at the table.

ELEANOR'S FIFTH TALE

PAWS OFF

THE housemaid whispered it to the scullery-maid, and the scullery-maid whispered it to the cook. "What nonsense these young ladies take into their noddle-heads," said she. "No, I declare I won't stand it any longer, that I won't! If Missus won't teach Miss better manners, I'll give her warning to-morrow, that I will."

"There's no standing her fandangoes," replied the housemaid, handing the cook a long bottle of rosewater.

"What a sweet delicate mind your dear Augusta has," said Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Brown at this moment, as they sat together in the drawing-room.

"She is such a sensitive creature, dear Gusta is," answered the lady. "Do you know, she makes our cook wash her hands in scent first, before she sets about her work; she says cook's hands always smell of onions."

"So delicate, so refined a feeling," replied her friend, taking a pinch of snuff, as some old-fashioned ladies and gentlemen will still do. If they could

only see themselves doing it! "Dear Augusta, I am afraid if she saw me she would think me a pure barbarian. But you know, old people, like me ——"

"She would not allow you *that* excuse, at least," said Mrs. Brown.

"Dear Mrs. Brown, you are so funny! but she has at any rate her sensibility by inheritance."

"Dear Mrs. Jones," answered her friend, affectionately pressing her hand, "If you could but tell what parents have to go through! There's John now just come home, and he afflicts me so, I don't know how to bear it. He is so cruel and coarse-minded! Now, would you believe it, he says of that dear sister of his, that she has so many fancies, that if she is not cured of them she will lose her senses: her common sense first, he says, and then her other senses afterwards."

"Shocking, indeed," said Mrs. Jones.

"And then he tells a story—a shocking story—that he does, Mrs. Jones, of a madman in a hospital who believed he was made of glass, and would let nobody touch him for fear he should crack him, while, to be sure, poor man, he was cracked already."

"You are always so funny, dear Mrs. Brown."

"My late husband, poor Mr. B., used always to say so, my dear," continued the lady. "But, as I was saying, the doctors did not know how they should cure the poor madman, and they consulted together ;

and then they rolled the man downstairs, in order to show him that he would not break in pieces. Nor did he, my dear, that I can assure you ; but when they went down to the landing-place they found him lying dead."

"But you were saying something about dear Augusta," observed Mrs. Jones.

"So I am now, my dear. John tells her that she will go mad, and lose her senses, if she does not have a care, but indulges in her sentimentalisms : so he calls them. You know, my late husband, poor Mr. B. was a furrier by trade, and honestly too he came by his money, Mrs. J. It was he who brought in the well-known Minx Albertines, you know ; but he never made them up of c-tsk-n : no : his feelings were above that, I can assure you."

"But dear Augusta."

"That's just what I was saying, my dear. Dear Augusta, you should have seen her when she was a child, dear Mrs. Jones, that you should, such a little angel as she was ; and then such pretty things as she used to wear. Her papa, poor Mr. B., my late husband, he would never let her dress in anything but the best ; that I can assure you of. It would have warmed your fingers on a cold day to see her, all in her furs—real sable, real ermine, no black kittens' tails sewed upon rabbit—from top to toe. And then she was such a sensitive little creature ! *I am sure*

that child will never grow up, I used to say to poor Mr. B. ; *she is too good for earth.*"

"It must be quite a relief to you to see her appetite," observed Mrs. Jones, breaking in on the conversation for a moment ; "she took to those dumplings at dinner, quite—quite cordially, I may say."

"And so she did," replied her friend. "Between ourselves, Augusta is no fool ; I can assure you of it. But she was *so* sensitive, dear Gusta, as I was telling you ! One day, when she was walking out with John (he was a little boy then, come home for the holidays, in his first straps), dressed in her furs, as I was saying, she went past the parish school. 'There's a little duchess,' cried one child ; that she did, I can assure you, Mrs. Jones—they all admired her so. 'I'll warrant you, quite a muff,' said another. And do you know, dear Gusta, she was so sensitive and so modest that she could not bear the compliment ? But what should she do but run home and tell her papa to go and order the master to beat the boy well who had said so. 'She could not bear such remarks to be made on her in the street,' she said ; 'it harrowed up her best feelings.' But all that's altered now, you know, Mrs. Jones. Do you know she can't bear the sight of fur now—no, nor the very name of it ! And she says if she wore any she would go into fits for certain. Oh, you should see her when the cat comes into the room, that you should ! And then, John's great New-

foundland, Crib, she cannot bear the sight of him. She declares it makes her wretched to think of the sufferings of the poor people in those hot countries he comes from ; that she does, I can assure you."

"She is a delicate, philanthropic creature, that she is," replied Mrs. Jones.

"And so sensitive!" replied Mrs. Brown.

"There's a new fandango of Miss Augusta's!" cried the housemaid to the cook, throwing down a basket of linen on the kitchen floor.

"Well, what now?" said she, turning to the fire ;—"la, this goose, how fat he roasts."

"I should like to roast her, that I should!" continued the maid. "She is a Miss Disguster ; that she is! Do you know now, she says I must wash all these things of hers again, and all for and because the cat jumped over the linen-basket as it stood by her room door!"

"That's what I call a fandango, that I do!" said the cook.

"And she says I may not wash the cat any more, as Missus tells me to do every Saturday evening ; nor comb the fleas out of her—poor beast. Miss Augusta says no maid of hers may touch *her* hair after she has done such work."

"I declare I would stand it no longer, if you was me," replied the cook.

"But I will wash poor puss, that I will," answered the maid; "and Crib too, dear old dog," said she, running up to Crib as she spoke, and hugging him round the neck.

At this moment the door opened, and in walked Master Brown and Miss Brown.

"La! you here, Miss!" said the cook; "you know Missus will turn me out of doors if she hears of it."

"Yes, but dear mamma need not know," answered the young lady. "Down, Crib; down, nasty brute! paws off!" screamed she; "paws off!" as the dog jumped up and thrust his honest hairy nose against Augusta's face.

"Do call your dog off, John," continued she,— "paws off, you brute!—and whip him well."

"Whip Crib! No, that I won't," said he, putting his hands behind his back. "Dear old fellow; he meant no mischief."

"Then I'll—I'll—I'll tell you what," cried his sister passionately, "I mean mischief; and I'll do it when I mean it. I'll run away from the house and hide myself, and see then what you will have to say to mamma!" And off she went, banging the door behind her.

Augusta ran out across the garden, through the little green gate, up the field lane, and so out into the wood beyond, before she had well thought of what she was doing, or made up her mind what kind of

mischievous it was to be. When at last her anger began to cool, "What a nice thing it will be to be lost!" thought she. "How mamma will be frightened! And then all the servants will come out with lights to hunt for me when it grows dark, just as they did for Valentine in the story." And down she sat for three-quarters of an hour, to reflect on how romantic, high, and delicately minded a young lady was Miss Augusta Brown, the famous R—g—t Street furrier's daughter.

But after a while she rose; and walking on, presently came to a little space where the trees had been lately felled. She had smelt something of smoke through the bushes as she walked, and she now saw a little wood fire, that seemed lately kindled. By it sat a poor boy, whose face was much blackened with smoke or ashes, holding in his arms what appeared to be a cat, suffering from injury that it had received.

"Do look at my poor puss," said the boy, starting up and running to Augusta; "she has been torn by the hawk! Do, pray, Miss, lend me your handkerchief to tie up her wounds? See how she bleeds!"

"Paws off, dirty child!" said Augusta, shrinking back; "you hurt my feelings—indeed you do. I cannot bear to see an animal suffer so."

"Oh, Miss, do pray be so kind!" continued the boy; "and do tell me how to get out of this wood,

for I've lost my way, and don't know whereabouts I be."

"Do take your hands off me! Don't let the cat touch me! oh, don't!" screamed Augusta, half in alarm. "I have nothing for you, indeed I have not," and off she ran into the wood.

Augusta had indulged her fancies till she hardly knew how to govern them; but she was rather a foolish girl than wicked or cruel, and already she had begun to feel half ashamed of herself and of her conduct, when, looking up, she saw, that although it was yet only the afternoon, the sky was dark with clouds and a storm was clearly approaching. On she ran in good earnest to escape it, and presently she found that she had really altogether lost her way. For the wood was tolerably large, and she did not know the paths except in that part which lay immediately near her mother's house. She called, and shrieked; and then she sat down and cried violently, and then she called again; but nothing answered her.

Augusta now started up and ran violently through bush and brake till her feet stumbled, and she fell against a little bank which had been hidden from her sight in the thick weeds and brambles which grew upon it. As she lifted herself up, she fancied she heard a sound as of footsteps behind her. In the greatest fear she forced her way desperately up the bank, and then with a sudden plunge over the other

side she found herself, as soon as she could think where she was, sticking fast in a pool of standing water.

The poor child struggled, but in vain, to reach the bank ; her strength failed her, and she sank fairly below the surface. But she still fought, as it were blindly, with the water, and grasped it in her hands. A roaring sound filled her ears ; a crimson light floated before her eyes ; she became insensible, and lay motionless as one that was dead.

And then—as those who have been drowned and recovered tell us—her soul seemed suddenly to return to her, and she awoke to a feeling of painless calm and happiness. While her bodily eyes were fast closed, the days of her life passed before her mind in a kind of vision, painted and impressed upon her with the utmost force and brilliancy. The existence of many years was collected into a single instant.

And then the struggle and the confusion came over her again, she knew not how ; violent agony and gasping seemed to break up the pleasant dream—or rather, so vividly had that vision presented itself, she seemed to wake from reality to dreaming.

She was indeed saved ; brought ashore, as she presently knew, as her senses returned to her, in the rough but kindly grasp of her brother's great Newfoundland. And she was lying on the grass by the water's edge, while some one's hands—so dazzled and

confused was she at first, she knew not whose — propped up her head, and poured something down her throat that seemed to restore her fainting strength. Augusta sat up; but instead of her brother—whom the sight of the dog, as he ran up to lick her hands with joy at an escape from a danger which he appeared well to comprehend, made her fancy must be near—she saw by her only the poor boy whom, but a few minutes before, she had treated with such unkindness in the forest. But a few minutes indeed had passed, but they appeared almost years to Augusta, and they truly wrought on her the effect of years. As she looked on him, a deep feeling of shame came over her.

“You have indeed done what I did not deserve,” said she, sobbing, for she now observed that his clothes were dripping with water, and that he, no less than the brave dog, had assisted to save her.

“It was only what one fellow-creature should do for another,” said he. “You were indeed near doing yourself a mischief in good earnest, Miss.”

Augusta hardly noticed his words. She had turned to the dog, who placed his paws, for joy, against her, whilst she patted and caressed him.

“And do you really forgive Crib?” said the boy. “Poor fellow, shall I whip him?”

“How is it you seem to know so much about me?” answered she; and every moment she felt

a deeper shame and repentance for her former conduct.

"Oh, every one hereabouts knows of Miss Augusta," said he, turning aside his face, almost as if he could not restrain something of a laugh.

Augusta now found her old vain, foolish self rising within her. It was not quite conquered. She felt almost angry with the boy—such a poor, ragged boy, too—for his familiarity, nay, for the very knowledge he seemed to have about her. And yet he had saved her life.

She looked down steadily and earnestly for a moment, and then, in a low tone of voice, she said—

"I know it ; I am to blame. I have shown my folly to every one ; and if all men know it, much more—much more—must it be known—elsewhere." And she burst into a flood of tears.

"Dear, dear Augusta, dear sister," cried the boy, suddenly, turning and taking her by the hand, "look up ; it is indeed I,—it is indeed your brother."

Augusta rose up quickly, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him without speaking.

Then the brother and sister went home together ; and if I were to give you the next conversation that took place in the servants' hall, you would see that the lesson of that afternoon was not thrown away upon the young sentimentalist.

It was now Charles's turn. But before he began his story, he begged the company present to pardon him, if they should think his tale too wild and improbable, for such he feared it might be.

"You need not apologize for a fairy tale, if that be your meaning," said Mrs. Wentworth. "On the last day, I am sure every one will feel that, if every one favoured us with wonderful stories, it would be but a slight offence against the rules you have arranged for your own government."

Charles observed that he had found the difficulties which Anna had pointed out, in regard to the fifth sense, press upon him; and then, unfolding his papers—Charles never spoke without notes, the children noticed—without further hesitation he began his story.

CHARLES' FIFTH TALE

THE WHITE SNAKE

LENARDO went to pass the night at an old country house, which was commonly said by the neighbours to be haunted. He felt very sad, for it was many days since he had heard anything of the lady of his love, the fair Blanche. People said that she had left her father's

house, and gone they knew not whither ; and as he had separated from her with something like angry words on his part, he now felt doubly grieved, and often blamed himself for his want of affection.

“ It was my caprice,” he thought. “ Why should I wish her wiser than she is, as if love went by learning ! Now I am justly punished ; but, oh ! when shall I see the dear face again ? ”

And as his mind was thus, Lenardo raised no objections when the people of the house led him for the night into a room which they said lay next to the haunted chamber, only warning him, as he valued his life, not to uncloset the door that opened into it.

“ Whoever received such an order, I wonder,” said Charles, “ without instantly desiring to break it ? ”

But Lenardo was so full of sadness that he felt little or no curiosity to enter the haunted room. So, however, it was not to be. For, as he lay awake, and went over in his mind all that had lately happened, the thought arose that, as he could not well be more miserable than he then was, let what might befall him, he would still try his fortune.

“ Perhaps some good may come of it—who knows ? ” said he to himself, as he slowly directed his steps towards the forbidden door, and unclosed it.

A little room was within, with blank, ghostly-looking walls, on which the flames of Lenardo’s half-extinguished fire cast a flickering glare.

"It is empty now, at least," thought he ; but as he thought, a light from one corner flashed on his sight. He looked earnestly, and saw now a white snake, who lay there coiled closely up, and was gazing on him fixedly with its small, brilliant eyes.

"Poor creature, it has received some wound," he thought, as he gazed on it more nearly, and saw the blood oozing from it in a small crimson stream. "Some one has injured thee, poor creature," he said ; and gently lifting it, he bound up the wound with his handkerchief. But in so doing, a drop of the blood fell on Lenardo's fingers ; he raised his hand thoughtlessly to wipe it off, but as he did so, he touched his lips, and at once the snake disappeared, and he found himself in utter darkness. Then he felt his way back into his own room, his old sad thoughts returned to him, and falling into a deep slumber, he scarce remembered what had taken place as he awoke and arose next morning.

And then Lenardo set forth on his journey through the world. As he stepped into the court, a little Bird sat singing and chattering on a bough.

"He has been within the haunted room ; he has seen the snake," said the Bird.

And Lenardo heard what he said ; and he now found himself, he knew not why, possessed of a new power, for whatever the birds or the beasts were saying to each other he could clearly understand it ; nay,

further, he found he could even converse with them, each in its own natural language.

Lenardo, who desired nothing so much as to find something which should drive his mind from those painful thoughts on his lost Blanche, was much pleased—as much as he could be in his sad way—with this strange gift; and he instantly determined that he would go out amongst the animals and decide for himself how they lived, and what manner of thoughts and affections, of which we have so little knowledge, theirs might chance to be.

And so thinking, he journeyed on his way. In the first village to which he came he found a showman leading about with him an elephant. A crowd of children stood about the elephant, and were admiring his sense and his gentleness, and especially the use that he made of his trunk, which seemed to supply him the place of hands, so exquisite was its power of feeling. He would separate with it the good from the empty nuts that they gave him without the slightest doubt or difficulty; he would pick up a pin or move a loaded waggon; and the crowning trick of all was to lift up his master, himself carrying a child on each arm, high over his head, and hold him there for several minutes in glory.

Lenardo drew near, and as the elephant went through his devices, he heard the poor beast mutter to himself, “Was it for this that I was born and

nursed in the wild woods of Asia, where my kindred now rest and wander at their free pleasure? Better were it to die, than so to be a slave to man's caprices."

Lenardo drew closer and said, "Why then not make your escape from them?"

And the elephant replied, with an inquiring look of calm surprise, "Oh! thou who canst speak to us, and we understand thee. It is because I fear man, and his power, and his wisdom."

"Only in your weakness is man strong," answered Lenardo. "Listen to me, for I am not a man like the rest. When night comes, and they lead you back to your cage, grasp the keeper gently with your trunk, and lift him into the boughs of one of the trees that grow by the wayside; then flee without delay, and join me in the forest."

When evening came, as Lenardo sat within the wood, he heard a rustling and trampling among the boughs, as if the whirlwind was approaching. And presently the Elephant, bursting his way between the thick trees, ran up, and embracing him with his trunk, thanked him, in words such as men use, for his deliverance from captivity. And they set out together on their travels, Lenardo taking his seat on the back of the Elephant whenever he might feel weary and foot-sore, and in his turn directing his bearer whither to go, that they might henceforth avoid the habitations of men.

But Lenardo's thirst for knowledge returned to him, and he said one day to his companion, "How is it that you, the beasts of the field, know how to find yourselves food and shelter within the forest? Who taught you, and whence have you such wisdom?"

"It is born in us," replied the Elephant; "from our very birth we have it, we know not how. It is, as it were, a blind feeling: we need make no inquiries of it; we do but follow its bidding."

"Is this feeling strong within you at all times?" asked Lenardo.

"When we have little ones to provide for, we are chiefly guided by it," replied the beast; "but if you desire to learn more on these matters, ask the Beaver or the Swallow, for they build themselves houses, which we need not, and are in all ways creatures more gifted than ourselves."

And Lenardo went to the Birds and said:

"Upon the trees of the forest, or beneath our roofs, you build your nests, and there you hatch and nurse your little ones, and there you pass a happy summer; and when autumn falls, you spread your wings and fly we know not whither, nor do you ask counsel what shall be the path of your journeying. But how is this, for I desire to know it?"

And the Swallow answered:

"How this is, we know not; we see not the land towards which we fly, nor is there any pilot who steers

us. And when we touch the ships of man, as we cross the wide sea and rest us a while on the lofty mast-tops, men gaze on us, and from our flight they take counsel to direct their steps over the trackless. But we ask not counsel of them, for within us there is a sense, and a feeling, and a motion, that is our guide and our leader. And, again, we take up our abode beneath the roofs of men, and we hear them within the house, as they labour, and strive, and sing; and the poor would be as the wealthy, and the wealthy strive among themselves; and the rich are not satisfied with their riches, neither the wise with their wisdom. But our little ones live in peace with us, and we ask not ourselves what shall be on the morrow; and we range the sticks, and the hay, and the earth in their order, to frame our dwelling; and we sweep over the surface of the lake for food for ourselves and our little ones, for love gives us this wisdom."

And then Lenardo journeyed onwards, and he soon reached the banks of a mighty river. What looked like a dam or bridge was cast across it, built of stakes cunningly arranged and wattled together. And along this were set the holes, which led to the habitations of the Beavers within.

"Man could not build a wall such as this," said Lenardo, "without the care and the study of many years. But whence have ye learnt the skill to construct it?"

"It is in us, we know not whence," answered the Beaver. "When the time draws near, and our young ones need food and shelter, something within moves us, and we prepare our resting-place."

"It is with them as with the Birds," said Lenardo to his companion, the Elephant. "Love makes them wise. We work and think, and toil, and add to our knowledge: for man loves wisdom. But lo! the time comes, and the Beaver and the Swallow lay their foundation, and strengthen their walls, and build a home for themselves and their little ones; and they think not *how* they should do it, for they have no need of such reasonings. But with what tools is the work constructed?" said he again.

"Behold, we carry our tools with us," answered the Beavers, lifting up on high their broad fish-like tails, and flapping them down on the river's bank with an air of evident satisfaction. "Our eyes are in our tails, we often say; for truly we need nothing else to direct us, but the sense of feeling; we measure and we weigh the stakes with our paws; our sharp teeth cut them through: we arrange and we plaster them with the mud of the stream; for such is the wisdom that has been given us."

And the Beaver and the Elephant begged Lenardo, that as the gift of understanding had been granted him, he would live with them and take up his abode in the forest, where no man should see him.

“Men toil and fret,” said they; “they labour in vain, for their toil satisfies them not. They ever wish something farther; and they hate and they injure each other, and the beasts of the field likewise; for they love not love, but wealth and knowledge.”

“We understand you not, and you understand us not,” answered Lenardo; for the remembrance of Blanche, and the love that he bore her, rose again in his mind, and he thought—

“They have indeed a perfect imperfectness; but has not man an imperfect perfectibility?”

“What is this behind you?” said the Elephant at this moment. Lenardo turned, and lo! following his steps he beheld the White Snake gliding over the greensward. Fear came over him, and yet, as he looked, a strange love towards the Snake arose, he knew not how, within him. And as he still gazed on with a glance of tenderness, behold! he saw the Snake no more. But Blanche—his own lost Blanche! Blanche herself now stood before him. And she said, “Have I found thee? He that parts us shall bring brands from Heaven, and fire us asunder.” And so they talked and travelled on together.

And then Lenardo looked on Blanche’s hand, and saw that it was bleeding; and he asked her how she had gotten this injury; and she answered him, That he must not ask it for a while, for that she lay under some strange spell, and that if he inquired, she could

not refuse to answer him, but that great evil would befall them both. But Lenardo was curious, and he fain would learn the reason ; and he said to himself, That all was not as it should be : and again, That love had no secrets. And so thinking, he cast a look on his dear Blanche—a look like that which Christabel's father cast on her as Geraldine stood by—in Coleridge's beautiful poem, which you ought to read if you have not read it, and to read again if you have read it—a look full of jealousy and suspicion. And immediately Blanche was no longer by him, but in her stead the White Snake lay on the ground and glided from his sight, trailing herself slowly along as if in pain and wounded.

Lenardo now burst into loud cries of sorrow for his own folly, and filled the air with shouts of " Blanche !" but it was too late. Only he yet heard a voice, as hers was, saying, "Not until Lenardo finds the Magical Touchstone and brings it to me can I return to my proper form again ; and the Touchstone must be sought by Love, and not by Knowledge."

And so he journeyed on again in solitude ; for the Elephant his companion and all the beasts of the field had forsaken him. But at nightfall the walls of a great Castle rose before him ; by the side of the gate there hung a bugle-horn, but he could see no man within or without. Lenardo lifted the horn to his lips, and twice he sounded it, but in vain. But

the third time the notes had scarcely gone forth from the bugle when an old man, strangely drest, stood before him. "What seek you here?" said the Magician.

"If thou art the Lord of the Castle, to whom I speak," answered Lenardo, calmly, "I seek rest from my sorrow and my labours."

"I am the Lord of the Castle," replied he. "Enter therefore within it. And I can make men wise in many things: learn, therefore, of me, for the heart of man gains rest and peace by wisdom and by knowledge."

So Lenardo went within the Castle, and he took up his abode there; and next morning the Magician led him to a lofty Tower wherein was a room filled with glasses, and fire-pots, and furnaces, and other strange things; and the walls of it were covered with magical figures, triangles, and pierced circles, and the signs of the stars of heaven. And there Lenardo studied and made himself perfect in the arts of magic, for he thought as he did so that thus he should gain possession of the wonderful Stone and free Blanche from her enchantment: for he had forgotten the words which she had spoken to him. And soon he called up the Spirits of the Air about him, and he bade them search for the Stone. And they went forth at his bidding, and they sought through air and earth, and under the earth amongst the caverns and the

mines, and through desert and mountain, but they found it not.

Now the Magician had one only daughter, named Sophiazza. She was a cruel and wicked woman ; and from her birth she had been frightful and terrible to look upon ; but she was very cunning and skilful ; and her father by his spells had caused it so to be, that whosoever looked on her, whilst she was within the walls of his Castle, should think her fair and beautiful. And as day by day went by, and Lenardo found that he could not obtain the Magic Stone, he began to forget his once-loved Blanche, and to grow into a fondness for Sophiazza, until he determined at last that he would offer to make her his wife, for he thought that he should never see the White Snake again. And when her father, the Magician, learned it, he was very glad, and said that the Castle and all that was within it should be Lenardo's ; and he fixed that the marriage should take place on the day following.

As Lenardo arose from his bed, he thought he heard a sound of voices near him ; and as he looked and listened, he saw two little Birds perched on two twigs that grew by the side of the chamber-window, and one Bird said to the other—

O'er the sun a cloud is spread ;
Tears of grief from Heaven are shed :
Earth and sky are clothed in gray :
Tell me what is done to-day ?

And the other Bird made answer :—

Folly reigns in Wisdom's dress :
None the loveless Love will bless :
Fools will go their foolish way :
Folly weds with Sin to-day.



Lenardo placed his hands on his ears, but the sounds pierced through, and do what he might, he still heard the song of the Birds. "What folly to be frightened by a bird," he thought, though yet his conscience

smote him, and springing up, he went forth from his chamber to the hall, where the Magician with his servants and followers were standing ready with the Bride. But as he passed through the doorway the Birds rose up and went before him, and he heard the burden of their song—

Fools will go their foolish way,
That is what is done to-day.

Yet once more he put down the voice of conscience, thinking, "No one else understands them;" and going boldly up, he made ready to take the hand of Sophiazza. But as he did this, a noise was heard among those who stood by, and lo! the White Snake, so long unseen, came slowly gliding up the hall, while the drops of blood fell from her as she went, and marked her path to where Lenardo was standing.

Sophiazza shrieked as the Snake came between her and Lenardo, and then lifting itself up, stood like a little pillar to part them asunder.

And when Lenardo saw what had happened, grief and shame filled his heart, and he felt his old love for Blanche return to him, and he looked on the Snake as he had before looked on it. And immediately a fair maiden stood between him and the false Bride; and he knew again that it was Blanche; and he saw that she bore a wound on her right hand, as if it had been struck with some weapon.

He stretched out his arms, and would fain have clasped her to him, but she stept lightly back, and said, "Not yet, Lenardo; not till I know that you truly love me."

And he answered, "Indeed I love thee, and thee alone. And for thy sake I give up my foolish knowledge, for I know that I have not sought thee as I should. For I thought that by cunning I would gain the magic stone and set thee free. But lo! my own folly has deceived me."

And Blanche said, "Let me hear once more, if you truly love me."

And he replied, "Indeed, I love thee, and thee alone, and for love's sake only."

At once a rushing of wings was heard, and a fair form that seemed that of an angel was above them, bearing in his hand a precious ruby.

But at this moment the Magician, with Sophiazza and the attendants, who had stood for a while as if spell-bound, rushed violently with loud shrieks upon Blanche and Lenardo, and drew their swords as if to kill them. But Lenardo held himself firm, and as each came up, he touched him with the magic ruby, and at once the Magician and his armed men became rooted to the ground, and stood there as stone figures. And when he touched Sophiazza, her beauty fell from her, and she was changed into the form of a hideous serpent, and fled hissing from the chamber.

Last of all Lenardo placed the magic gem on the hand of Blanche. Immediately the blood dried up and the wound healed, and she threw herself into his arms and said gently : “ I am thine—thine for ever.”

And Lenardo answered : “ Be it so, dearest. For thou, and thou alone, hast cured me of my folly, that seemed wisdom ; and for thy sake I give up my foolish knowledge—that appeared knowledge, and was not ; for I see that to man it is not permitted to know the love of wisdom, till he has first learnt the wisdom of love.”

And he placed Blanche’s arm within his, and they left the Hall together, whilst the sun broke gaily through the clouds, and the two birds flew before them and sang with cheerful voices :—

High the sun unveils his head :
Tears of joy from Heaven are shed :
Earth and sky are fair and gay :
Tell me what is done to-day ?

And the other answered—and indeed both sang it together :—

Wisdom reigns in light above,
Wisdom only wise by Love.
Charm and veil are cast away :
Wisdom weds with Love to-day.

The children seemed well pleased with Charles’s story.

"I wish you would give us more poetry," observed Mrs. Wentworth. "You, Charles, have especially owed it to us, inasmuch as the verses in the original of your 'Uncaged Lion' are one of the principal among the many beauties of Goethe's story."

"I felt so at the time," replied he; "but the fact is, double rhymes in English are too tiresome."

"I have a greater complaint to bring," said Emily. "Charles has poached on my preserve, and has taken to himself the fairy story which, by the right of our original agreement, was to belong to me."

"It is the last day, remember," answered the lady, "and so we shall make allowances."

"Oh, do tell us some more fairy stories—do!" cried the younger children; "we like them much the best."

"And I—and I," said each in turn.

"Well, I hope I shall give you satisfaction," replied Emily, smiling.

EMILY'S FIFTH TALE

VIOLA

A LONG time ago, before you or I were born, there lived a woodcutter in the heart of a great forest. No one knew how, but nothing seemed to go well with the poor man: his cow ran away, and was lost in the

wood ; his cottage thatch was blown off by the wind ; and at last his wife died and left him alone in the world with his one only daughter, Viola.

One day the Woodcutter had gone forth into the forest with a heavy heart to his daily work. He grasped his axe firmly in both hands, lifted it above his left shoulder, and gave a great blow against the trunk of an old oak tree, which had been long since marked out for felling. But in place of burying itself within the wood, as he had expected, the axe seemed to meet with some hard substance, harder than adamant itself, and with the violence of the blow the head flew off, and broke into a thousand shivers.

Everything is against me!" cried the unhappy man, and he cast his eyes down to the ground.

"Not everything, if you choose it," said a voice from above, which made him start again.

As he looked up, a huge Giant stood there before him. He would have taken to flight at once in his fear, but he found he could not stir from the spot. But the Giant bid him not shake so much, and said that he need no longer toil and groan at his work, if he chose ; for he would make him rich and happy in an instant, only he must promise to give him what was standing behind his cottage, which, he said, with much politeness, as he was in no hurry, he would come in three years time and fetch away.

"There's nothing behind my cottage but my old

apple-tree that has left off bearing," thought the Woodcutter; "he is welcome to that, sure enough, if he likes it: it may make him a walking-stick." So he told the Giant to take it, and to fulfil his promise.

The Giant laughed and strode away through the forest with long steps; and the Woodcutter returned to his cottage rejoicing. As he came to the door, his old servant Elspeth ran out to meet him. "Ah, master!" she cried, "master! where does all the money come from?"

"What money?" said he.

"Why, the house is all full of money," answered she, "chests and boxes full; and yet I never saw any one bring it in."

"I got it cheap from an old Giant in the forest," replied the Woodcutter. "It is from him that the money comes, and in return I am to give him whatever is standing behind the cottage, which you know——"

"Ah, master!" shrieked old Elspeth, breaking in, "what have you done? It must have been a bad Spirit, who wishes to carry off your dear Viola, for she has been standing behind the cottage, all the morning, poor child, a-washing the linen."

The Woodcutter's daughter was very pious and beautiful, and she lived a good and holy life for the three years. And when the day came on which the

bad Spirit, who had appeared to her father as a giant in the wood, was to carry her off, she washed herself in pure running water, and crowned her head with a garland of violets and roses. Directly the Fiend appeared : but he was unable to come near her. In a fury he called the Woodcutter before him, and gave him such a terrible look with his fiery eyes, that the poor man fell on his knees, and promised, in his fear, that Viola should not go to the stream again to wash herself ; for if she did, the demon said he should have no power over her. But next morning, when he appeared again, Viola had been weeping all night over her hands, and washing them with her tears. And so a second time the Demon was disappointed : but in a still more terrible rage he called to the Woodcutter and said, “Cut off her hands, that so I may have power over her.”

Then the Woodcutter threw himself at the evil Spirit’s feet, and begged him to take his life sooner than order him to do so dreadful a cruelty. But the Fiend glowered at him, and said, mockingly, he would do it, if her father did not, and that it should be worse for both of them.

Then, in the agony of his heart, the Woodcutter went to his daughter, and said, “My child, if I do not cut off your two hands, the Fiend will carry us both off, and it will be worse for us, for we are in his power.” And Viola answered, “In Heaven’s power,

too, my father. But I am your child ; do with me what you will." And then she stretched out her little hands, so that with one stroke her father cut them off. And then he fainted for grief, and lay as one dead.

But when next morning the Demon appeared, Viola had shed so many tears over her arms that they were clean and pure, and as this was now the third time, he had lost all power over her, and fled away disappointed into the wilderness.

Then Viola went forth from the cottage, for she could no longer bear to live there, to seek her fortune in the wide world. "God will have mercy on me," she thought, "and He will turn men's hearts to have pity on me, and on my poor wounded arms." And so she walked on for that whole day, till night fell, and the moon arose upon the earth. And then Viola found herself by the side of a royal garden, and as she looked, by the bright moonbeams she could see beautiful trees, laden with fruit, standing in it ; but a ditch full of water, that ran round the garden, lay between them and her.

But Viola had eaten nothing all day, and she was faint with hunger ; and as she still looked on the fruit trees, she thought, "O that I was within the garden, and could eat of the fruit of the trees, for else I must perish with hunger."

And then she knelt down and prayed that help might be sent her. And as she prayed, at once an

Angel stood beside her—so near is earth to heaven, only we know it not—and with his hands he made a pathway in the water, so that Viola could cross over in safety. And so she went on into the garden, and the Angel went with her. Then she saw a low, crooked tree, covered with the most beautiful apples, but each apple was numbered. “They will miss them,” she thought. Yet her hunger was so great, that she stepped quickly up to the tree, and bit three apples from the bough with her teeth as they hung there, for she had no hands with which to pluck them. And as soon as Viola had tasted the apples her strength returned, and she lay down in the long grass to rest till morning.

All this while the Gardener, who was set to watch the golden apples, was looking on ; but as he saw the Angel standing by, he feared to speak, for he knew it was a heavenly vision that he had seen. At day-break came the King, to whom the garden belonged ; and when he counted up the fruit, he found three apples missing. Then he turned to the Gardener, and asked him how this was ?

The Gardener answered : “ A Spirit came last night, who had no hands ; but she plucked the apples from the tree with her mouth, and ate them.”

“ How did the Spirit pass the water that goes round the garden, and whither has it gone ? ” asked the King.

"An Angel in white garments, shining like snow, came down from heaven," answered the Gardener, "and with his hand he made a path through the water; and because I saw that it was an Angel I feared to speak to it, or to the Spirit with it; and as to whither they went, I know not."

Then the King wondered, but he only said, "Next night I will watch in the garden with you."

When evening fell, the King came into the orchard, and he sat himself down with the Gardener under the apple-tree to watch what should happen. And at midnight Viola rose from her hiding-place, walked towards the tree, and again she plucked three apples from it with her teeth, and ate them. And close beside her stood the Angel in his snow-white raiment. Then the King rose up and said, "Art thou come from earth, or from heaven? and shall I call thee a spirit or a living soul?" "I am no spirit," answered Viola; "I am only a poor maiden: and I have none to help me, except God alone." And the King said, "If none else help thee, yet will I ever help and love thee." And then—for he saw that she was fair and good—he took Viola to his castle; and he caused silver hands to be made, that might be fitted on to her poor wounded arms: and then he made her his wife and his Queen, and loved her with his whole heart and soul.

Now after a year's time it came to pass that the

King had to go to the wars. And so he went to his mother, the Queen-dowager (who was a very good and charitable lady ; but I have forgotten her name, which began with an A) and said to her, “When my dear wife comes to lie in child-bed, as she will before long, take good care of her, and write and tell me of it directly.” And so Viola brought into the world a beautiful son ; and her mother-in-law took good care of her, and wrote a letter with the joyful news to the King without a minute’s delay. But so it happened, the messenger to whom the letter had been given forgot his way, and went to sleep on the edge of an enchanted forest. Then the Fiend, who was ever on the watch to do the good Viola some harm, came, and took away the letter from the messenger as he slept, and put another in its place, in which it was said that the Queen had brought an ugly changeling into the world. When the King read the letter, he was much grieved and frightened, for he hardly knew what to think of it. However, he sent back the messenger with an answer, in which he wrote :—“That they should take good care of the Queen, Viola, and of her child, until he should return and see them.” The messenger went homewards with the letter, and he stopped at the same place where he had rested before, and there he lay down and slept soundly. Then the Fiend came again, took the King’s letter away, and put another in its place, in

which it was said, "That they should burn the Queen and her child alive; for that now the King was sure she was a witch." When the King's mother read the message, she was seized with grief and terror; and she wrote another letter to the King, to beg him to think of what he had ordered, and to change his mind, for that Viola was no witch, but his own faithful wife, and had brought him a beautiful son into the world. But the only answer that came was a false answer from the Fiend, "That in order that the King might be sure that his commands were obeyed, his mother should send him the Queen's own robe, stained with her heart's blood; for that he knew well she was a witch."

But his old mother wept at the cruel message, and she thought, "Some madness must have fallen on my son. I can never shed innocent blood." And so she ordered a heifer to be killed at night, and she took the Queen's own robe and dipt it in the blood. Then she went to Viola, and said to her, "I cannot put thee to death; but you must stay here no longer; for I must take you and your child and place you in a chest, and cast it forth into the sea: for so the King orders, and I cannot disobey him. But God will be your helper." And Viola said, "What my husband orders, that I must do." And so they took her and her child, and locked them up in a chest, the lid of which was filled with holes, and they put

some bread and water in the chest, and cast it out into the deep sea.

After many days had passed, and Viola had almost given up all hope, it so happened that the winds and waves bore the chest to land, and cast it on shore in the country that belonged to King Berengarius. The



King was walking on the beach, and when he saw the chest washed up, he ordered his servants to take it and carry it into the palace. And when it was opened he was much astonished to find within the beautiful

Queen without hands, and her child. And he took them out and treated them kindly : and Viola told Berengarius of her misfortunes, and how her husband had cruelly treated her ; but yet that she wished to go and seek him out, for she was sure some madness must have fallen on him. And meanwhile she stayed in the King's palace, and Berengarius treated her as if she were his own daughter. But Berengarius's Queen was a very wicked woman ; and she was jealous of Viola, for she thought her husband loved her too much. And so one night, when all else slept, she called Viola and her child, and bade her guards take them and drive them far away from the palace into a great wilderness, where she thought they would perish of hunger. But Viola, when she was cast out, and the guards had left her, knelt down with her child on the bare ground, and prayed God to be her helper. And immediately an Angel stood by her, bearing meat and drink in his hands ; and he gave Viola to eat, and pointed out to her the way which she should take over the wilderness. So she went on with the child, and at last she came to a little cottage, on the door of which were written the words, " Come in, and take comfort." And out of the cottage there came immediately a maiden in snow-white clothing, who said, " Welcome, fair Queen," and brought her and her child within. Then the maiden took Viola's child and laid it at its mother's breast ;

and after a while the child slept, and the maiden took it softly up and put it in a cradle that stood by. Then poor Viola said, "How did you know that I am a Queen?" and the maiden answered, "Because I am an Angel from heaven, and I am sent to take care of you and your child." Then Viola dwelt in the cottage for seven years long, for so she was bid to do, and to wait thus till her husband should be sent to visit her.

But meanwhile the King Berengarius was very sorry for what his wife had done; and in hopes that he might discover where Viola had hidden herself, if she were yet alive, and might give her back to her husband, he caused proclamation to be made, that all persons who had any sorrow to complain of should come to his court. O how many came! and he relieved them; but there were no tidings of Viola.

And now the long war was ended, and the King, Viola's husband, returned to his home, and desired to see his wife and child. Then his mother began to weep, and said, "Wretched man, what was it you wrote to me? that I should shed the blood of the innocent?" And she showed him the two letters which the wicked Spirit had written in the King's name, and said that she had done what he had ordered her, and showed him for proof Viola's robe, stained with blood. Then the King, without speaking, began to weep bitterly for his dear wife and child, until at last his mother took pity on him, and said, "Comfort yourself;

she is still alive ; I killed a heifer, and dipt her robe in the blood : but I cast forth Viola and her child, for I feared your wrath ; and whither they have gone I know not." Then the King answered, " I will go and search for her, as far as the sky is blue and the night is black ; and I will eat and drink nothing until I have found again my dear wife and child." And so he went forth, neither eating nor drinking ; and yet he did not faint with hunger, for strength was given him from above. And he sought Viola far and near, but he heard nothing of her. At last news came to him of the proclamation which Berengarius had put out, and he thought, " I will go thither, for who in the wide world is more wretched than I ?"

When Berengarius saw the King he said, " You seek the Princess without hands ; but, alas ! I know not where she is, or whether she be living." And he told him all that had happened.

Then the King went forth into the wilderness, and in it he wandered up and down for seven years, neither eating nor drinking. And at last he found a little cottage, on the door of which was written the words, " Come in and take comfort." Then the maiden in snow-white clothing came forth, and took him by the hand and led him in, and said, " Welcome, noble King," and asked him whence he came thither. He answered, " Seven years have I wandered up and down in the wilderness, and have sought my wife and

child, but I have not found them." The Angel set food before him, but he would not eat of it; and then he laid him down to rest, and the Angel covered his face with a veil as he lay sleeping.

Then the Angel in snow-white clothing went into the room where the Queen was sitting with her son sorrowing, and said to her, "Follow me with your child; I have good news: the King your husband has arrived here." Then Viola went into the room where he lay asleep, and saw that the veil had fallen from before his face. And she said to her child, "Son, lift up the veil and cover your father's face with it, for he sleeps, and would not be awakened." So he took up the veil and spread it over the King's face. But the King heard what was said in his sleep, and he let the veil fall again to the ground. Then Viola said again, "Son, lift up the veil and cover your father's face with it, for he sleeps, and would not be awakened." But the child grew impatient, and said, "Dear mother, how can I spread the veil over my father's face? I have no father, on earth. But you have told me that my father was in heaven, and I kneel down and pray to him; but I have never seen his face. How then can this wild man be my father?" Then the King smiled, and he could no more restrain himself, but he sprang up and embraced the child, and said, "My son! my son!" And the Angel touched Viola's arms, and at once her hands were restored to her, fair as they had

been before. And she ran to her husband, and said, "I am Viola! I am thy own wife Viola!" But the King looked down and said, "My wife had silver hands." And she answered, "Those you gave me, dearest; but an Angel has given me these, look! and they are what I had when I was a baby." And she held them up; and they were smoother than ivory, and rosier than coral.

Then the King saw that it was his own Viola, and he took her and his child in his arms; and they told each other of all that had happened; and when they had heard it, they wept and they rejoiced together, and they knew that their wanderings, and their dangers, and their partings, were ended for ever.

"Well, I think we may fairly say you have kept your best for the last, Emily," said Mrs. Wentworth; "though whether Emily's readers will think so is another matter. She begs not to interfere with any one's judgment."

"Not I; however, you know," answered she. "Do not make me confess twice."

"I don't find all in your original, Emily," said Arthur, who had been observed for the last few minutes mysteriously turning over the leaves of a certain small volume, printed in what looked like old English letters on what looked like dirty blotting-paper.

"Ah, fie!" cried she; "exposing me so! But if you look to Grimm's third volume you will find the Italian version of the story, from which I have taken an incident or two to interweave with the German."

"What! Are *all* those Fairy Stories,—all?" cried the younger children.

"Yes, all," said she; "and the best set that were ever put together."

"Wait a little longer," observed Mrs. Wentworth, seeing Emily look rather puzzled at the modest request that she would read them "all over" to the party. "Some day I hope you will be able to read them, and many other good things, for yourselves."

"Miss Cobham is a very good German scholar," said Anna, "but it only begins in the third class."

"Well, everything in time; but now listen to me," cried out Arthur, making a gruff voice, and a speaking-trumpet of his hands. "Come and listen to the LAST STORY!"

ARTHUR'S FIFTH TALE

THE GIPSY GIRL

GISELLA was a gipsy girl, who had been brought up in a hut on the edge of a great, wild, mountainous common in Spain. The first thing she clearly remembered was that she had been snatched up from

the straw on which she lay (her cradle) one winter's night, and had been carried out by her mother into the cold air, whilst the little hut in which they lived had gone up all in fire and smoke behind them. She was then but three years old, but the blaze of the flame had as it were burnt the whole scene clearly into her memory, and she remembered being told afterwards it was because one of the gipsies was thought to have stolen the child of some rich parents and carried it off to their camp, where the magistrates' officers who had been sent to search for it had lighted the huts from anger at not finding what they came to hunt for. This, as I said, was the first thing that Gisella remembered ; but while she was yet a little thing, she would sometimes talk of a strange dream she had dreamt when a baby—all about a great king's house and many servants and lights, where she had played with other children like herself, and whence she had been taken, she knew not how ; for no one can say why it is that dreams end as they do. But her mother did not like to hear her little daughter talk of this dream, and on that very account it probably turned out that, as she grew up, this was one of the few remembrances of her girlhood which Gisella had not forgotten.

But, as I was saying, she now lived in a little gloomy hut with her parents and brothers on the edge of a vast common. And as the travellers came

walking or riding by—for there was no carriage-road—they would often stop at the gipsy tents to rest a while and to give themselves and their horses drink at a clear stream which ran not far off. And then Gisella and the gipsy women, like other women, would come out from their dens and stand at the door (or rather the chimney, for smoke and sooty-looking people used to come out of it), and they would offer, like other gipsies, to take the traveller's hand (not for the purposes of shaking, but) in order to look at the marks and lines on the palm, which are really made by the foldings in the skin, but which they pretended were a kind of book, or prophetic writing, from which, by the art of palmistry, as it was called, they declared they could tell the travellers' "fortunes," or what was about to happen to them in the rest of their lives. I need not tell you that the gipsies knew and cared no more of what was going to happen to the travellers who passed by than you or I should; nor need I say how foolish it was in the one, and how wrong in the other, to have anything to do with such false prophecies. But so the gipsies have lived for many hundred years; and it was not the most dishonest way most of them had to come by their living. Of course, too, the more money they received from any one who asked his fortune, the better fortune they promised him; for promises are cheap. And if any

one who came by twice had stopped to ask himself, he might have remembered, that if the gipsies had promised that he would marry a rich merchant's only daughter for half-a-crown, for ten shillings they had given him hopes that he would wed a princess as beautiful as the moon and brighter than the sun—for this was commonly the best thing they took the liberty to promise.

Now, one fine summer's day, it came to pass that Antonio Valdez, a young man dressed like a merchant, with a great money-pouch and air of business—for he was travelling from Toledo to Seville on business for his father, a great wine-merchant in the province of Andalusia—rode by the gipsy camp. As he saw Gisella, now a pretty girl of sixteen, stand at the door of her hut and beckon him towards her, he alighted from his horse, and giving it to his servant to hold, he walked up to the young maiden. Gisella, who had been brought up like other gipsies, and never thought of right or wrong in doing what they did—poor thing, she knew no better!—offered at once to tell Antonio his fortune; which, she said, looking firmly at him with her large dark eyes, she was sure would be a good one. Antonio had never before seen any one so beautiful as Gisella—standing there, before the miserable hut, with her long dark hair and dark eyes, and bright ruddy colour, like a precious stone on a dust-heap. Pulling out his

leathern purse, he put it in her hand, and bid her tell him whatever she chose ; whatever came from her lips, he said with a low bow, he should be satisfied with it.

Gisella took his right hand, spread it carefully out, and looked closely at the palm, noticing the marks and lines that crossed it from wrist to first finger. She made Antonio fold it, and open it again, and fold it, and meanwhile she seemed to murmur strange things to herself. At last she said, "Merchant, your fortune is to marry a king's daughter."

"How *could* you tell that I am a merchant?" asked Antonio, with much surprize, and some terror.

"Oh ! do not think anything is hidden from me," answered Gisella, mysteriously.

"What is the name of my princess ?" said he.

"That is hidden from me by a cloud," replied she ; "but come again in a month's time, and I will tell you."

"Do not fear but so I will," said Antonio, with a low bow. "If I don't, fry me in garlic !" thought he, as he mounted his horse and rode off towards the city of Seville.

All the way Antonio thought of Gisella, of her beauty, her wonderful knowledge, her wretched gipsy life, and of the princess she had promised him. "I had rather she were my wife than all the

princesses in Spain and both the Indies," thought he; "and I will have her, come what may of it! What do you think of it, Pedro?" said he, turning to his servant. "I think your honour is much fitter for a princess than a gipsy; and they say they never marry anybody except one of themselves—gipsies to gipsies: so it should be, master," answered Pedro. "But an ass laden with gold can jump over a mountain," he murmured to himself—(his master did not hear him, but I did); "and so his honour can marry a gipsy girl if he likes, no doubt." And they did not waste any more words for the rest of their journey.

But Antonio thought over what his servant had said. "Well, come what will, I must have her, though she makes a gipsy of me," thought he. And so, when the month was nearly over, during the whole of which he did not once wash his face, dressing himself up in an old dirty coat, and combing his hair down wildly over his forehead—by all of which means he thought he made himself look very like a gipsy—he set out on foot, and with no companion, for the camp. But what was his grief and astonishment when, on reaching the spot, he found the huts gone, and no signs of any living creature near. Nothing remained except a few tall poles on which the tents had been hung, and the blackened circles on the turf where the fires had been lighted.

What should he do? There was no one who could tell him whither the gipsies had moved, or would have cared to do so if they had known. He wandered about over the ground till he found the place where the hut had stood at the door of which he had seen Gisella. He looked down on the ashes of the fire, and thought of the beautiful maiden who had so often kindled it. And as he looked he saw, or thought he saw, traced out on the ashes the words, "If the merchant of Toledo seeks me, he will find me near him." And then Antonio started for joy, and he looked round, and called out, "Gisella, Gisella!" But no one answered. "She laughs at me," he thought. And then again, in a gentle whisper, he called, looking towards the bushes by the stream-let's bank, "Gisella!" but still no one answered. "If he seeks me, he will find me near him;" he read the words aloud. "I see it! I see it!" he shouted out, striking his hand against his side. "She knows everything that concerns me; she knew where I was going." And without a moment's delay he set forth once more on his return to Seville.

It was evening before he reached the city. No one knew Antonio, the rich merchant's son, in his strange dress, and so he wandered freely on from street to street in search of the gipsies. And as he passed through the great square he saw a large crowd gathered together at the door of what seemed

a theatre hastily put up with rude boards and scaffold-poles for some travelling players to show themselves in.

Antonio pressed his way in among the throng, and entered the theatre. On a sort of stage, a gallery at the further end, stood a crowd of gipsies in their strange dress, who seemed to be preparing to sing some of their rude ballads for the amusement of the lookers-on. Antonio strained his eyes to see if he could among them discover his fair Gisella, but in vain. Still, however, he continued gazing as if some spell bound him to the spot, till his eyes could scarcely trust themselves, when the gipsy band divided and gave way, and Gisella, such as he remembered her, came forward with hasty steps to the front of the stage. Her long hair fell streaming over her shoulders, and she looked more beautiful, he thought, than ever, as with a clear distinct voice she poured forth a wild native song, while the rest of her company kept time to her words with the music of shrill flutes and rattling castanets :

O'er hill and o'er valley
By village and city
As we halt and we wander,
We chant our wild ditty.
From cities men chase us,
But we flee to the mountain,
To feast in the wild woods,
To drink at the fountain.

From the mountains they chase us ;
Earth finds us a haven,
A home with the wild deer,
A nest with the raven.
They pass us with laughter,
Yet they turn them to hear us ;
We bend our dark eyes,
And they tremble and fear us.
For where'er we may wander,
The stars wander o'er us,
And the light of their wisdom
Is shining before us.
As we gaze and we mutter
Man weeps and rejoices :
For their eyes are in our eyes,
Their voice in our voices.
Love lies at our feet,
Love awaits our disclosing :
Life bows at our bidding,
Death fears our disposing.

As Gisella ended, her eyes met Antonio's steadily fixed on her countenance. Was it the shouting and applause which the crowd raised at her song, or what was it? The colour left her glowing cheeks ; but without a word she gently waved her hand towards him, as entreating that he would give no sign that he knew her. For at this moment the whole company of the gipsies came forward, and ranging themselves in groups, invited the crowd to draw near, if now they desired to learn what their future lives would be. The people shouted, and ran violently onwards, hardly knowing what they did, so

much were their minds moved and stirred up by the strange song they had heard and the wild looks and gestures of the gipsies. In the hurry some lost their footing, and fell ; the rest, unable to draw back, pushed on over them : and presently the whole theatre was filled with loud shrieks and voices of terror. Then a loud shout arose : “ It is the gipsies ! the magicians ! At them ! they have done it ! ” And as the ignorant crowd, made foolish by fear, is easily led on to fury, without reflecting that it was no fault of the strangers if mischief had befallen, the foremost leapt and clamb upon the stage and began roughly to handle the gipsies, who, now terrified in their turn, endeavoured to fly from the danger. Gisella, who stood foremost in the company, was the first they reached. Already she was dragged off amid shouts and cries, and it seemed likely that her life would have been violently taken, when Antonio, rushing boldly forward, with one stroke of his doubled fist struck down the tallest of those about her, and clasping her in his arms, dragged her in safety forth from the building.

A great crowd went after him, and shouts of “ To prison ! to prison with the gipsies ! ”—for such they took Antonio to be—sounded in their ears. “ To the King,—to the King with them ! ” cried others, as in their flight they passed the open gates of the palace, which stood on one side of the great square.

“Oh, to the king,” said Gisella, softly, to Antonio. “It is for life or death.” And, while the increasing crowd still pursued and pressed on before them, through guards and servants the two forced their way within to the main Hall of the Palace.

Mobs and tumults such as this are not uncommon in Spain ; and the King, who was at this moment in one of the inner chambers, learning presently what had taken place, came forth without delay to do justice on the offenders. Taking his seat on the throne, he commanded Antonio and Gisella to be brought before him, and asked what they could say to defend themselves.

Antonio spoke boldly, and made it clear to the King how the accident and the confusion in the theatre had arisen. Others who had been present then replied ; but after the space of a few minutes, the King, rising up, declared Antonio and Gisella guiltless of what was laid to their charge.

O how happy they felt at their escape ! They had just begun to look at each other—and I dare say they would not have waited till they were out of the palace to begin talking—when the King commanded a silence, and said, that by the laws of Spain no one of the race of the gipsies was suffered to dwell within the kingdom. And inasmuch as they had broken this law, he condemned them both to ten years of imprisonment.

"I am no gipsy! Hear me!" cried Antonio, from whose mind, in the haste of the moment, the appearance which he bore had entirely passed. "I am no gipsy; I am the son of Antonio Valdez, merchant of Toledo!"

"Your dress convicts you," answered the King; "you, and the maiden with you. No more!" said he, seeing that Antonio was prepared to speak. "Guards, take them, and lead them to prison. There bind them with chains, that they may know their crime. They have broken the laws of our kingdom."

But at this moment a loud cry of "The Queen! the Queen!" arose in the crowd behind. All eyes were fixed on her as she flung suddenly forward from the King's side, and, casting herself on her knees, seized Gisella's hand, held it to her eyes, and kissing it with many tears of joy, cried, "Catherine! Catherine! my daughter! my own Catherine!" Then turning to the King, "It is her hand. Look, it is Catherine's! Look, here is the scar!—the scar of the cross which her nurse pricked on the palm when she was an infant."

The King looked, and was silent. He could not speak. His hand trembled violently as he laid it on her arm. "Look!—oh, look!" cried she. "Oh! is it not so?" glancing at him in an agony of fear. But his look was sufficient.

And now a low, joyous, and increasing murmur

arose among the crowd: for the story how the Princess had been stolen from the palace when a child but three years old—it was said, by the gipsies—and how the King and Queen, her parents, had long sorrowed over their lost treasure, and sorrowed in vain, was well known in Seville. The Queen still gazed on her daughter, and was silent. Silence was the “perfectest herald of her joy: she had been little happy, could she have said how much.”

“Oh, was it so? was Gisella really the King’s daughter?” cried the children, suddenly bursting in; “was she, really?” And they started up at once and pressed close to Arthur. For he had so told the tale to the life, with signs and suppressed whispers, and then again with louder bursts of voice, that they almost thought all he said was going on before them. “Oh, was it really so?”

“Really—really; so at least I believe, on the best authority,” answered he, with a smile, and a tone so serious that Emily, do what she could, laughed aloud to hear him.

“Hush! hush!” cried Mrs. Wentworth, “you will break the spell! You know we have not yet heard how Antonio married the Princess, as Gisella had promised he should when she told his fortune.”

“I think I must leave you all to imagine that,” said Arthur, stepping quickly down from his place by

the side of the rosewood table which had served as pulpit or platform to so many discourses, amid the astonished looks of the younger children. "I hope you are satisfied," added he: "Why, you are as silent and appear as surprized as the Queen herself!"

"And so he did marry a Princess!" cried Lucy, speaking before the rest had recovered themselves. "I see how it was, Arthur! But, dear Arthur,—no, indeed, I am not quite satisfied—not *quite*; and I will tell you why."

"Why?"

"Because it is the last story," said she, running up and kissing him.

"Oh, do tell us one more!—do tell us them all over again," cried out the little ones, roused by the importance of the moment, and speaking once more together.

"Anything to please you—a slice of the moon, or a brick off the chimney corner," said Arthur. "But why," added he, turning to the lady hostess, "are not you satisfied?"

"How did you know I was not?" said Mrs. Wentworth.

"Because I read it in your eyes," said he.

"Well, it is because not only you, but the rest also seem to me not to have kept so closely to your subject as you should. You have handled it—if I may say so (it is the last day, you know)—without sufficient feeling."

“It is the hardest of all in that point,” said Emily ; “so, as before, we beg your forbearance.”

“I was thinking,” continued Mrs. Wentworth, “that it would be very pretty if you could manage to combine the subjects of the Five Days into one ; and so give a graceful close to the entertainment.”

“Agreed ! agreed !” said Arthur, with a bow to Mrs. Wentworth.

“Well,” said she, smiling, “I see your meaning ! Only you must give me a few minutes’ law. Though, indeed, I am not sure,” added she, as the bright sunbeams, relieved from the long-spread veil of clouds, burst laughingly through the windows, “I am not sure that the weather is not against us. You know, your stories were only told by way of amusement when nothing better could be had out of doors.”

“Our works have no doubt had the advantage of a feeble light to conceal their defects,” said Arthur ; “but I cannot question but that yours, Mrs. Wentworth, will bear a closer examination. So with your leave we will take the little ones into the garden, and await your leisure beneath the great beech-tree on the lawn.”

Mrs. Wentworth was content. Like a swarm of bees set loose from the hive (and let us hope that the stores they had there gathered may prove like honey to other young listeners) the whole party rushed out on the lawn ; and a happy half-hour or so was there

celebrated with shrieks of joy and laughter, with leap and race, and gathered fruits and flowers, until the appearance of two ladies, who walked with grave and measured steps to the turf seat below the beech-tree, caused them to collect themselves once more for the last—positively and most decidedly the last—of their Five Days' Entertainments.

“What an unexpected pleasure,” cried Emily, as she ran up first, out of breath with the speed of her own running, and heartily shook Miss Cobham's hand, “What an unexpected pleasure !”

“If it is so to you, I am sure it is so to me,” replied their kind governess, welcoming in turn each of her young pupils as they came up with laughing eyes, parted lips, and heightened colour, to throng and cast themselves about her. “In crossing from one friend's house to another my road led me to pass within a few miles of the Grange, and I could not resist the temptation of looking in ; even though I bring recollections of school into the midst of holidays.”

“Good things each in their turn,” cried Anna, gaily, “each in their turn—but you with both.”

“Thanks, thanks,” answered she. And with a heightened feeling of pleasure the party arranged themselves, as best they could, on the short dry turf beneath the overshadowing branches.



THE NEW GRISELDA

MRS. WENTWORTH'S TALE

THE NEW GRISELDA

SOME six thousand years ago, they say it was—and so before I can easily remember—there lived on the banks of the river Euphrates, a Prince named Edma, who reigned over the whole land of Mesopotamia. His wife, the Princess Ginevra, was the most beautiful princess whom men had ever seen: and, except that at the time I am telling you of, they had no children, they lived together in the greatest happiness.

But stop, children, (said Mrs. Wentworth, putting her hand before her forehead,) what am I about; I have forgotten my preface; it ought to have come first, I suppose—you must excuse me! you know I did not expect the honour of having to tell a story.

Well, as I was saying—no, as I was not saying, only I meant to say it. You know, children, how in your story-book one tale is very often like another, so that what looks like a new book has often very little really new in it. And I daresay you have been often disappointed so to meet old friends in a new dress. But the fact is, and it is a curious thing, that all the world over we find that much the same stories

have been told from the beginning. Perhaps it is because children, and grown-up children whom people call men and women, are alike all over the earth. However this may be, there seems to be something like a circle of tales, which come over and over again, and repeat themselves in all times and places. And so the story I am going to tell will remind you of that famous tale of the Patient Griselda which you have probably all read. You will remember how cruelly Griselda was treated by her husband the Count: how he took her children away from her, and said that he would marry another wife in her place: and all to see whether she loved him or no: and how patiently and quietly she bore it all: and how she was rewarded for her love and her patience in the end. Perhaps indeed the story was copied from what I am going to tell: as Griselda did not live so long ago as Ginevra, only this you must judge of for yourselves.

But Ginevra and Edma, as I was saying, had lived together happily for many years. At last, however, the Prince heard that an army of the giants was about to march into his kingdom, and to take him prisoner. So he gathered together his armies, and took leave of his dear wife with many tears, only telling her to be sure and keep the orders which he laid upon her, and he knew she was left in good hands, as he had begged his own mother, Urganda, to come and take care of

her till he should return from battle. Now this Urganda was a very powerful fairy.

("Oh, I am so glad of it, so glad!" cried Lucy, clapping her hands.

"Don't interrupt, child," said Mrs. Wentworth, laughing, "or I shall never finish.")

Urganda was a fairy, and as soon as she was left to take care of the Princess Ginevra, and saw how good and gentle she was, she determined that she would put her to trial—and the cause of Urganda's conduct I shall afterwards mention—to see how far she really loved her husband, and how far she would be patient under misfortunes; for everything, as I have said, had hitherto gone happily with her.

And so after a while, she put together a story, and wrote a letter to the Prince, in which she said, that she was sure that his wife, for all that seemed to the contrary, did not love him as she ought: that she had a pet snake, and a pet bird, to which she had given all the affection and care that she should have kept for him. Nay, further, the letter said, Ginevra had broken his strict order, and had gone into the enchanted orchard, where she had broken off three golden apples from the bough; and *whom* Ginevra had given them to, Urganda said, she did not know: though she "could not but fancy, and grieved she was to think it," that Ginevra must have presented them to the powerful and wicked king, Lucidor, who

was one of Prince Edma's most terrible and deadly enemies.

All this was of course quite untrue : for Ginevra was far too good and gentle to disobey her husband in anything : and then, she had been brought up in piety and innocence from her childhood ; so, unless she had quite changed her nature suddenly, how should such wicked thoughts ever come into her head ?

But Edma was seized with rage and jealousy when he received the letter, and as he was just then much pressed in battle by the Giants, he sent back word to Urganda that he could trust her wisdom, and her love for him ; so he gave her leave to have full power over his dear and faithful Ginevra.

When Urganda received this message, she began gradually to change in her outward bearing and conduct, and in all ways to try the Princess. Ginevra, as I said, had as yet no children, so she loved her pet animals instead, for she was a loving creature. And first Urganda took away one, and then another, till at last none were left but her dear little Green Bird, who now perched himself on one of the beams of the high roof of Ginevra's room, so that Urganda could not lay hands on him. And Ginevra wept bitterly as these, her living treasures that she loved and cared for so dearly, were taken from her : but she only said, " It is my husband's will : he may do as it seems right to him."

So when Urganda saw she could not move her to impatience by means such as these, she devised a further plan to try her. And one day, as Ginevra sat in her room and thought of her husband, the Fairy came in, and said gaily she had news to tell of the Prince.

Ginevra thought by Urganda's voice that it must be good news, so she cried out cheerfully,

"Oh! what is it? I was just thinking of him!"

"He has forgotten you, and has married another Princess, the daughter of one of the Giants," said Urganda, "and he will be here presently: so prepare to receive the new Princess."

Then Ginevra felt very sick at heart: but she only looked up patiently to the sky, and said, "It is my husband's will: he may do as it seems right to him."

But when the time now drew nigh at which Urganda had said Edma would return and bring his new wife to the castle, and she saw that the Princess in her humility and patience made all things ready to receive them, and prepared herself to do the work of a servant to her new mistress—for she said, "Oh, if Edma will suffer me yet to remain in his sight, I may be happy"—then the seeming cruel Fairy came to her and said, "Ginevra, I have another letter to-day from the Prince, and he bids me say that you shall no longer dwell within his castle, and that he will not suffer you to see him again—for you love him not,

and so he loves you not. But before he comes, you must go hence and spend the rest of your days on the desolate Island of Atlantis : so now make ready for the journey."

But Ginevra only bowed her head to the earth in her patience, for she could no longer bear the light of the sky above, and said gently, "It is his will : he may do as it seems right to him."

And then the Fairy, who had determined now to try Ginevra to the uttermost, lifting up her thin and withered finger, uttered her curse on the Princess in these words :—

Senseless, speechless, cold, alone,
Charm'd and frozen, stone in stone,
Fair Ginevra, shalt thou stand :
Till I wave my signal hand :
Till the curse be slowly past :
Will thy love unalter'd last ?

The words were scarcely spoken when Ginevra felt herself carried she knew not whither. The last glance of her eyes showed her a fair island, thick with woods and gay with flowers, and the shining walls of a temple, within which she was hurried. Then a sudden shock seemed to strike her ; utter darkness and unconsciousness fell upon her soul, and she stood there like a statue, knowing no more of the Present than we do of the Future.

This curse was the last and most cruel trial that

Urganda could lay upon her. Ginevra now knew nothing : she could neither hear, nor see, nor feel ; for all her senses had been taken from her : she could hold no communion with things about her : the world without was as a thing she had never known : only one feeling remained—that of pure, simple being ; she knew that she *was*, and that was all. As that fair Niobé in the old Grecian story, she stood there with her hair flung backwards, her eyes turned towards heaven—parted lips and clasping fingers—like one transfigured into marble.

And was there no help for her ?—no hope ? Edma knew not what had happened ; he was deceived by Urganda's false letters. He thought, even now, of his Ginevra as careless—for as unfaithful to his love he could *never* think of her : he tried to put away the thought of her a while from his mind, for the war with the Giants raged fiercely, and it was for life or death that he was fighting. And yet Edma loved Ginevra still, nor ever wavered for one moment in his loyalty towards her.

But as he sat one day in his tent, thinking over the many strange things that had befallen him, Ginevra's own favourite Green Bird, whom Urganda had never been able to take from her, flew in ; and with a sharp cry perched above his head. And then the Bird spoke, and told him of all that had taken place since he had left his castle ; of Urganda's falsehood and

cruelty ; of Ginevra's patience, and her love towards him ; and of what had now befallen her. And then grief fell on Edma's heart, and repentance for what he had done, and suffered to be done, to his fair and faithful wife. "Why should I suffer Urganda to tempt and try her so?" he thought. "Was it for me to doubt her love?" And then again wonder and surprize at Urganda came over him ; for he had received little except kindness from her in his own youth, and he had hitherto loved and trusted her as a son. But there could be no doubt *now*, he thought, that she had become his bitter enemy—else why had she so deceived him? And so, gathering together his forces, he marched back with what haste he could towards his palace in the centre of Mesopotamia.

As he drew near to the palace, Urganda prepared herself and came forth to meet him. But she was quite alone, for no one of Edma's people would go with her, and this frightened her very much. So she went forth into the garden and plucked off a branch from the King's own tree with five golden apples on it, and she took it in her hand and went out into the wood by the palace to seek her fortune, and try to gain for herself whatever aid she could.

And presently she found a table spread out with all manner of dainties in the forest, with one chair set at the end of it. And the food from the dishes placed itself on the plate in front of the chair, and then it

seemed to lessen and melt away by morsels ; and the wine emptied itself into the glasses that stood by, and yet she could not see who it was that emptied them, for there was no one near. So Urganda went on, and at fifty miles distance she found a Giant sitting on a gate, and swinging it backwards and forwards, with his mouth open. "What are you doing?" asked she.

"Fifty miles hence is a feast spread in the forest," said he, "and I am tasting the dishes and the wine that are on the table."

"Will you come with me?" asked Urganda.

"What will you give me?" replied he.

"I will give you one of the golden apples from the King's orchard," said she ; "so follow me, and we two will go through the wide world together."

So when they had gone a little way further they found a huntsman, kneeling with one knee on the ground, and stretching his bow with his left hand. "What are you shooting at?" asked Urganda.

"Fifty miles hence I see a fly sitting on a bramble-bush," said he ; "I am going to hit his right eye."

"O will you come with me?" asked Urganda.

"What will you give me?" replied he.

"I will give you one of the golden apples from the King's orchard," said she ; "so follow me, and we three will go through the wide world together."

So they went on together ; and presently they came to a place where some windmills were standing in a row, and their sails were turning round and round so fast that their eyes could scarcely see them : but when they looked right and left they could find no trace of wind, and not a leaf of the aspen-trees was quivering. Then Urganda said, " I see the sails turning, but where is the wind ? " And when they had travelled on for fifty miles more, they saw a Dwarf sitting on a bough, who was holding one of his nostrils close with his hand, and blowing through the other.

" Dwarf, what are you doing ? " asked Urganda.

" Fifty miles hence stand seven windmills," answered he ; " look how they turn whilst I blow ! "

Then Urganda asked him to come with her, and he answered and she spoke ; and he came with her like the others.

Then they went on, and after a while they found another Giant, who was lying on the ground with one hand on his right ear. " What are you doing ? " asked Urganda.

" I am listening to what the sun and the seven stars are saying to each other," answered he.

" What are they saying ? " asked she.

" No matter," answered he.

And she gave him the fourth apple, and he too came with her.

And so they went on together for fifty miles more, and then they saw a man standing on one leg, but the other was unbuckled and lay on the ground beside him.

"Ah, sir, you look comfortable," said Urganda to him.

"Like chanticleer on his perch," answered he. "I am a racer, and I have unbuckled one leg and taken it off that I may not run too fast; for when I run with both legs on, I go quicker than the birds."

"O buckle on your other one, and come with me?" said Urganda.

"What will you give me, if I do?" asked he.

"I will give you one of the golden apples from the King's orchard," answered she; "so follow us, and we six will go through the wide world together."

So they six travelled on in company, and presently they came in sight of Edma's army, ranged in order of battle on the edge of a great hill. "Can you see Edma?" said Urganda to the Archer.

"I cannot see the King," answered he, "but I can see the General of his troops; and I will shoot an arrow, and strike off one of the feathers on his helmet."

And then the Archer drew his bow and shot: but whether it was by accident or no I cannot tell, but the arrow was aimed a little too low, and it pierced the

General through the eye, and stretched him dead on the ground. And when Edma's troops saw that their General was killed, they turned round and fled, and he was unable to stop their flight, but remained alone on the field.

So presently Urganda marched forward to meet him ; and when he saw her he cried out,

“Where is Ginevra?”

“You will never see her more,” said she ; “she loves you no longer.”

“Take me prisoner then, and kill me if you will,” said Edma ; “for, if she loves me not, I care no longer for my life.”

“I might take you prisoner at once,” answered Urganda, “but I will not be cruel to you ; I will give you one chance. One of my servants is very swift of foot ; you may run with him, and he who is conquered shall be shut up for his life in the highest tower of the Palace.”

“So let it be,” said Edma. And it was agreed that whoever could first fetch water from a spring that burst from the ground a long distance off should be conqueror.

Then Urganda's racer and Edma took each of them a pitcher, and started for the race at the same moment ; but in a moment, before the Prince had made more than a few steps, they heard a sharp whistle, and

then no one could see the racer any more, for he had darted out of sight like the wind. In another moment he was at the fountain, filled his pitcher with water, and was returning back. But when he was now half way on his return he felt weariness come over him, so he set the pitcher down, threw himself on the ground and fell asleep, laying his head on a block of wood that was in the way.

Meanwhile Edma, who could run as well as any mere man could, had reached the fountain, and hastened back with his pitcher full; and when he saw the racer lying asleep, he was rejoiced within himself, and cried out, "The enemy has given himself into my hands:" and with that he turned the racer's pitcher over and emptied it, and continued his return towards the place whence he set out. Now Urganda thought everything lost, when, suddenly, the Archer with his sharp eyes saw what Edma had done, and he said, "The Prince shall not win;" and with that he took up his bow and sent an arrow so cunningly that it pushed away the block of wood beneath the racer's head without hurting him, so that he waked and stood up: and he saw his pitcher empty, and Edma flying back to the starting-point. But his courage did not fail: he seized the pitcher, ran back to the fountain, and then, swifter than the wind or the lightning, was at Urganda's feet full ten minutes before Edma reached them. "Did you see me?" cried

he, in his glory ; “ I only used my legs the last time ; as for the first, I could not call *that* running.”

So Edma was defeated : and then Urganda took him and carried him back to his own Castle between the Four Rivers, and shut him up in the highest tower, and threw the keys into the Euphrates. But when night came on, the Green Bird spread out his wings and flew up high through the air, for fear lest the Archer should see him and bring him down—and then in by the little grated window into the room where Edma was lying bound with heavy chains. The sight of the Bird gave great comfort to the Prince, and he was about to speak ; but the moment he opened his lips, the Green Bird, who knew that Urganda had set her servant to listen to whatever went on in the tower, flew upwards to the roof, and fluttered with his wings as if alarmed. So Edma held his peace and spoke not a single word, but sat there in patience, as Ginevra had done, for ten days and nights ; and at the end of that time he began to suffer greatly from hunger and to be faint, and at last he cried out, “ Oh that I were in the cottage of the poorest of my subjects, for they want not bread or water ! ”

Immediately a table seemed to rise from the centre of the floor, covered with dainties and with wine. Edma, however, feared at first to touch anything, thinking there might be poison in the food, for he

knew it must have been brought there by magic. But the Green Bird flew down, and with his beak plucked some of the fruit, as if to assure his master there was no danger. Then Edma sat down to the table. But at once, by order of Urganda, who had caused the table to rise in the dungeon, the Giant who sat in the lowest room of the tower opened his mouth, and in a moment ate up the whole of the feast, leaving Edma still more faint and starving than before ; and, like Tantalus in the story, all the more miserable for having seen what he was not permitted to handle. And every time he wished for food the same magic was repeated, till he threw himself once more on the boards and thought that now at last his life must pass from him.

But Urganda was afraid to let Edma die in the tower, lest his subjects should learn it and should rise and punish her. So she sent those five who came with her from the forest ; and they took him and placed him on the top of the tower of the Castle ; and then the Dwarf, closing one of his nostrils, blew with the other so terrible a blast that Edma was lifted high into the air and carried he knew not whither, over land and sea, till at last he was cast ashore on the very island in which, though he knew it not, Ginevra was now standing, changed as it were to stone by the curse with which Urganda had smitten her.

And then Urganda, without seeking what had

become of Edma, took possession of the Castle and city, and reigned in his stead.

Edma was presently found, and kindly used by the people of the island ; and after they had given him food, his strength came back ; and as he did not know where he was, he set forth early in the morning to travel over the whole island and to see what might be upon it ; and as he walked, he saw a beautiful white Temple, built of the purest marble, standing like a thing all of light in the midst of a thick cedar-wood ; and two or three tall cypresses rose like dark spires in front of the Temple. It seemed to be a festival day, for crowds of people from all parts of the island, dressed in gay dresses, and with garlands of fresh leaves and flowers on their head, were advancing in due order towards the door-ways, from which the sound of beautiful music and the rich scent of burning gums and incense came forth and floated on the sea-breezes. Edma, whose whole heart and thoughts were set upon Ginevra, felt his soul sink within him at the sight of so much joy and gladness. He sat down on a large stone that lay by the road-side near the temple gate, and thought over all that had happened ; and the more he thought of it, the more strange and dreamlike did everything appear that had taken place since he first left his kingdom to go out to the war. It seemed strange to him that Urganda should treat one who had done her no

wrong with so great cruelty : strange that Ginevra had never sent him word of what had befallen her : stranger still that she should have been wanting in love towards him. He began to think he must have been miserably deceived—that after all she had never loved him, or else she would now surely seek him out, or at least send him tidings of herself. “It must be true what Urganda said,” he thought, “and she must have pretended to make war on me, and then sent me forth hither in order that I might not know how my wife had deserted me.” And as he thought this, Ginevra, as she stood there within the Temple, even in her frozen and senseless state, felt a cold chill pass over her. But Edma knew it not, but sat there murmuring out his sorrows to himself as the people went by him rejoicing. One maiden let fall her garland and went onwards without perceiving it. Edma took up the flowers and turned them over in his hands, while he thought of the day when first he saw and loved Ginevra in all her beauty. “She was my flower then,” he said to himself ; “but now her sweetness is not for me. Can she be as fair as when first I saw her ? Is her beauty less ? That cannot be,” he thought. “Yet, if I saw her now ; ah ! I fear, though she may be no less fair, yet she would love me no longer.” And then, as the sound of the music floated on his ear, the words of a song rose within his mind, and he whispered it over to himself for a little comfort :

SONG

And is her smile as fair, as when
Its light to love first call'd me :
Her blush as fleet : her voice as sweet
As when it first enthrall'd me ?
The golden wave of locks undimm'd :
The eye as bright and tearless :
The step as sure—the heart as pure—
The soul as frank and fearless ?

I doubt she little thinks of me,
Nor heeds my deep despairing :
Yet is she not by love forgot,
Uncared for, as uncaring.
But is she still the Heav'n she was,
For which my fancy panted ?
Or has the spell work'd all too well.
And left her disenchanted ?

Ah, how can Spring be aught but Spring,
Though mine the wintry weather ?
How can it be the charm should flee,
Or Love from Beauty sever ?
I doubt not that her eye is bright,
Altho' its glance disdains me :
No more her voice bids grief rejoice—
Her Image yet enchains me.

Ah ! if he had known the curse that had fallen on his dear Ginevra, his thoughts would have been far different.

But now Edma rose, and following the last of the crowd, entered the Temple just as the gates were closing. Louder and louder music,—like that which

some of you may have heard, children, in Mozart's opera of the "Magic Flute," where Astrifiamante, the Queen of Night, comes forward in her starry splendour—rose and swelled upon his ear in great chords, as he walked on towards an Image which he saw standing at the furthest end, and which all present within the Temple seemed to worship. Edma looked up: one glance—and there she stood!—Ginevra herself—his own Ginevra—in all her beauty, before him: but as if frozen to lifeless marble. A loud shriek burst from his lips, and he fell—senseless like her—upon the pavement.

When Edma awoke from his trance, he found himself alone within the vast hall, face to face with the statue. That Image enchained him. He could not move from before her. "Ginevra! Ginevra!" he called out: he embraced the figure: he clasped her knees: he called again: but there was no hint of life or hearing. And now a sudden knowledge darted into his mind; and he saw what Urganda had wrought, and what the curse was that had fallen upon Ginevra. He looked about him in despair, when, lo! through the wide opened doors of the Temple the Green Bird flew gaily in, and, beating the air with his wings, bore himself, thrice, round the head of the enchanted Princess.

And then the charm which Urganda had laid upon her began, as she had said, slowly to pass away and

leave her. And first—as she told Edma in after times, when after her long patience her senses had been fully restored to her—she seemed to awaken from the blind sleep in which the days had gone by since Urganda's curse ; and, though as yet with her eyes closed, yet to feel something like the sweet scent of flowers and of incense : although indeed she knew not what they were. “ Before this took place,” she said, “ I was aware of nothing : not even of my own life. I had forgotten everything : I was an infant once more. Only, perhaps, I had a general feeling, if I may so say, that Something existed, though that that something was myself I knew not. It is hard to make what I mean clear, but it was something like what we feel in dreams, when we think we see our own selves, separated and parted from ourselves, speaking perhaps and acting, and yet have a hidden knowledge or feeling of life all the while. As yet I knew not whether these flowers belonged to, and were part of me, or not ; for this was the only thing by which I had any knowledge of the world without me. But as the scent of roses gave way to that of lilies, and that again perhaps was followed by the presence of the burning incense-gums, as the brazier shifted, a new knowledge—that of Number—arose within me. One—two—three : I could count the pleasures as they followed each other. Then again, one scent was sweeter and more grateful to me than

the rest : one was strong, another faint ; and thus the thought or idea of Difference in Goodness and Difference in Degree came before my mind."

When thus a week had gone by, again the Green Bird returned ; and again flew thrice in circles round the head of Ginevra. And then she awoke to the higher sense of Hearing. It was indeed a new pleasure to her, whose soul had so long dwelt in utter silence, when the sounds of wind, of the music of the Temple, the human voices of those within it, burst in upon her. And "Oh," she said, "when first your voice, Edma, fell upon my ears, it seemed like some strange, magic music. I knew not yet, clearly, of anything without me, nor could I separate what I felt from my own very life and being ; and yet, when I heard you speak, when you said, 'Take comfort, little one,' the spell seemed passing away. I was all happiness, for a warmth and a glow seemed to stir within me, and to say there must be something beside myself, though I saw it not, which cared for me and loved me. And now too—if I am to tell you how step by step thoughts and feelings such as they are in all human creatures sprang up in my soul—I felt, when I compared Scent with Sounds, that there were differences not only in Degree—as in degree of pleasure—but in kind and nature. I almost felt as if I contained *two* selves, when at one time the breath of music, at another the

breath of flowers, floated in upon my dark and blinded soul. But above all, I felt myself gifted with a new power. The sense of Sound without awakened the thought of Sound within me : I could move my lips—I could frame and utter sounds for myself—I could hear myself speak !”

(“Oh, what were her first words? tell us; do?” cried Lucy, bursting in upon her mother’s story.

“Need I tell you?” answered Mrs. Wentworth. “Cannot you guess them for yourself? I think they were only ‘*Edma ! Edma !*’ ”)

So that week went by. And in the next, that gift which is perhaps of all others the most precious, was restored to our patient Ginevra. She opened her long-closed eyes, and *saw*. Strange—very strange—did all things appear to her at first, and other than we see them. For as one of you, children, truly said on the first day of your stories, we learn to use our eyes as we learn to use our tongues ; only these are commonly the forgotten lessons of our infancy, which in later, conscious, life we can recall no more. But Ginevra had, as it were—as I said before—from the effect of Urganda’s spell, returned to her childhood : or rather, her childhood had been moved into her youth. so that she was aware of what goes on at a time when most of us are aware of nothing. And further, as I said before, she as yet knew not whether there was any real thing *except herself* : she could

draw no line or distinction between what was within and what was without her. For this was, as you will hear, the last thing of which she gained knowledge. And so there she stood, for she feared to move : for she could *feel* nothing ; and she knew not whether the Temple about her, and the palms and cypresses of the island which she saw through the open doors, and the sunlight that streamed in through the roof, and the blue sky and the clouds that sailed white and glowing, trembling with light and heat above her ; nay, whether Edma himself, who stood before her, watching and waiting, patiently as herself, till the spell should completely pass, were not so many fair pictures and creations of her mind. Was not this curious ? For the sense of Feeling—by which alone we know that our own bodies, and all things beside, are and exist—was as yet not given back to her. If her lips moved as she spoke, if the pretty colour flushed and faded in her cheek as her eyes rested upon Edma, she knew it not. She made no voluntary movement. And yet that gift of Sight had greatly increased the extent and range of Ginevra's knowledge. To the knowledge of Number—to the knowledge of Difference—she could now add the knowledge of Form and of Colour—nay more, the *knowledge* of that gift which she did not yet partake—that of motion. The sun gave her no heat, for she could not feel it ; yet she saw him rise and go down in his order. The breeze

brought her no coolness ; yet, not only by the rise and fall of the sound, by the fluttering of her dress and the waving tops of the cypresses, she could count its breathings.

And then, as the days went by, at the close of another week she knew she had gained the new power of Taste, though at first only by the increased and altered pleasure which the sense of smell, so closely united, as you know, to that of taste, gave her.

But we must here leave Ginevra for a while to return to the history of her old enemy, the Fairy, Urganda. For a time she reigned in peace and triumph over Edma's kingdom, and did not seem to think any more of him or of Ginevra. But at last, one day, calling one of her servants to her, she bid him listen and say if anywhere he heard tidings of them. The Giant laid his ear to the ground, and presently answered, that Edma and Ginevra were alive and in the distant island of Atlantis, where the charm that Urganda had laid upon the fair Princess step by step was passing away from her. Urganda shrieked with astonishment at the news, and without a moment's delay set forth, alone and unattended, to seek them out across the western sea.

After a while she reached the island and found her way within the Temple. Ginevra still stood there, a living statue ; for all senses except that of feeling had been restored to her. At the sight of Urganda

the colour fled away from her cheek, and she closed her eyes in fear, not knowing whether some new spell might not be presently laid upon her by the power of the Fairy. Edma paused, and at the sight drew his sword and rose violently forward to bar the way to Ginevra.

“You!—ah! how have I been deceived,” cried he. “You, my mother, the cause of all this sorrow. Alas! are we not safe even here from your power, Urganda?”

“Fear me no longer,” answered the Fairy; and a look of love and gentleness, such as Edma remembered of old, came over her face as she spoke: “Fear me no longer! my task is done. Ginevra’s love and patience have been tried to the uttermost, and she has remained ever faithful. I know her heart, and I know that no thought disloyal or impatient has crossed it.”

They both looked towards Ginevra for a moment, and were silent.

“Do not ask me,” Urganda presently continued; for she saw Edma would have spoken, and she could easily foretell his words: “do not ask me *why* this trial has been laid upon her. Let it be enough for you to know, it is the last trial of your patience—that what I have done has been not of my own will, but as the force of circumstance has laid upon me. It was written above that it should be so, and let that be enough. For what regards myself, my son—for

what regards myself, I have done all in love to you ; nay, has it not been all as a dream ?”

“ It has been as a dream,” answered Edma, thoughtfully ; “ and yet, alas ! also as a reality.”

“ Believe me, as the years go by, it will all be as a dream to you and to her,” said Urganda, “ if even as a dream you can recall it. But the time for awakening is at hand. If I am come now, it is to set Ginevra free, and to call you back with her to your palace and your kingdom, there to dwell together in happiness.”

“ So be it,” said Edma ; “ So be it,” said Ginevra, as she stood, fixed and motionless ; and then Urganda, stepping up to the Princess, gently touched her lips and uplifted her hand. At this moment the Green Bird, winging his way like a lightning-flash within the Temple, flew thrice round her head, and then darting through the opening of the roof above, was lost from sight in the depths of the blue sky. The last portion of that heavy curse fell from Ginevra. With the sense of feeling, as it shot like a sunbeam through her whole frame and person, all her old self was restored to her. She not only could see and hear, but could feel that it was she who heard and saw, and that other human creatures like her were about her. Urganda led her gently forward, and placed her hand in Edma’s ; and when her fingers were clasped in his, Ginevra, who had for so many days patiently looked on Edma, thinking it was his will that she should suffer so strangely,

knew that she had awakened from the magic dream. All doubt, and fear, and sorrow passed away from her like a cloud : and with a cry of joy and love she threw herself into his arms, and the reward of her patience was accomplished.

“ Thanks, dear Mamma, thanks,” cried Lucy, breathlessly, when Mrs. Wentworth had ended.

“ Thanks,” said Arthur.

“ Thanks,” cried the rest of the children.

“ Thanks, thanks, and evermore thanks—is this all they can give ?” said Miss Cobham.

“ Children’s thanks, and their love with their thanks,” answered the lady with a smile. “ But what more would we have, after all ?” said she, more gravely, looking round upon the little party (May 19, 1852) :—
“ What more ? Is not this enough ?”

Then the children all scattered themselves, and some of them began to talk over the five days’ entertainments which they had themselves given and listened to, and others to play at more games than I have here space to tell of ; and besides, I am afraid of tiring you, MY LITTLE DARLINGS, all the world over, for whom these stories have been written out. But whilst they were playing, the clock struck seven,

and Mrs. Wentworth looked at Miss Cobham, and cried out to her own little one, "Why, Lucy!" On which Lucy looked up and coloured, and said, "Am I to say my hymn, Mamma?"

"Yes, dear, I think so; because my little Lucy has been laughing and playing, she would not wish to leave God out, would she?" On hearing which, the other children were all as quiet as mice in a moment, and Eleanor came up and gave Lucy a kiss, which encouraged her, and she said her little verses in a low voice:—

Thou that once, on mother's knee,
Wert a little one like me,
When I wake or go to bed
Lay thy hands about my head;
Let me feel thee very near,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour dear.

Be beside me in the light,
Close by me through all the night;
Make me gentle, kind, and true,
Do what mother bids me do;
Help and cheer me when I fret,
And forgive when I forget.

Once wert thou in cradle laid,
Baby bright in manger-shade,
With the oxen and the cows,
And the lambs outside the house:
Now thou art above the sky;
Canst thou hear a baby cry?

Thou art nearer when we pray,
Since thou art so far away ;
Thou my little hymn wilt hear,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour dear,
Thou that once, on mother's knee,
Wert a little one like me.

After this Lucy turned round and ran off as quickly as her little feet could take her ; but when she came to the door, she heard them all crying out, *Good-night, darling*, and she turned round again, and looked to her mother, and said :

“ Will you not ask them all to come again next year, Mamma dear, and then I shall be so much wiser and taller, and perhaps I may try to tell a story too, like the rest ? See how tall I am already ! ”

And then Lucy went into the corner of the room, by the door, where a great pot of pretty azaleas was standing, and stood up in the corner, and measured herself with a little wooden ruler that she had picked up, and said, “ Look at me now ! ”—and I am not sure that she did not even get up a little on tiptoe when she saw the others looking. And whilst she was doing this, by the greatest good luck a friend of mine, who paints beautifully and brightly, and knows and loves children, came in and made a little picture of her ; and another friend, who also knows his work thoroughly, made a lovely little print after the picture ; and THERE SHE IS, on the first page of this very book.—What a little duck ! say

I ; . . . and I hope every one will say the same who looks at her.



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